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ISSUE 659

CARAVAN WORLD

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ISSUE 659
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FIRST WORDS JOHN FORD

Because of the wet conditions, our trip to the Northern Territory has been postponed until June. This proves that in our land of drought and flooding rains, a well-prepared travel plan needs a backup.

The delay meant we missed the Parrtjima festival around Alice Springs, which we had looked forward to seeing. The 10-day event combines artistic light displays, cultural workshops, an art fair and more. The highlight was a light show against the backdrop of the majestic MacDonnell Ranges. Parrtjima is one of the main events in central Australia each year and helps drive visitor numbers to Alice Springs. I'd be keen to hear from anyone who attended this year about the experience.

Although changing plans can be a bother, it's nothing compared to the devastation flood waters brought to the agricultural industry. Wet conditions spread across to Queensland, where record floods have killed hundreds of thousands of animals and wrecked countless miles of fencing and infrastructure.

These remote communities will need a lot of support. While tourism organisations ask travellers to hold off for a few weeks, the country will soon bloom into spectacular vistas.

Keep an eye on the western Queensland tourism websites for the best time to travel because caravanners can make a big difference by spending some dollars in each town. And in a month or so, Lake Eyre will be filled with wildlife, so a flood of tourists is expected.

Further afield, we have received advice from the Exmouth tourism body that they are focusing on eco-conscious travel and have urged visitors to pre-book camping areas to protect the region for future generations. From what I hear, sites and tours are filling up quickly or are already booked out.

This issue is the first of our two-part Caravan of the Year wrap-up, and it was a struggle picking a winner from so many stunning entrants. The level of innovation, engineering and build quality improves yearly, making the judges' task more demanding. So, congratulations to the team at Spinifex Caravans who drove down from Queensland to take home their second trophy. The special couples van scored highly across all 10 categories and wowed the judges with a perfectly completed interior, generous off-grid capability and comfortable liveability. Sunland Caravans took home the Best Build Quality award this year, and we look forward to bringing you the remaining category winners in our next issue.

Stay safe
John

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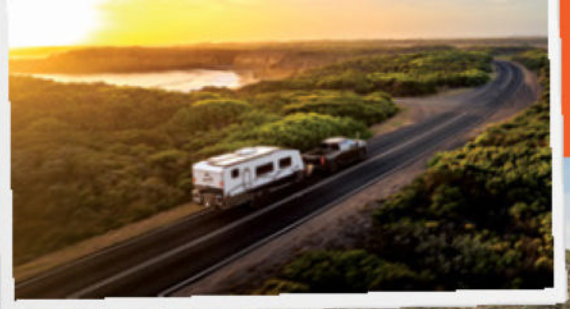

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Spinifex Epix Premier 21ft 6in
***Photographed by** Ted Airey*

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QUALITY PRODUCTS FOR SERIOUS TOURERS

ENTER THE NEW READERS' RIG OF THE YEAR COMPETITION!

ENTER NOW!

Our epic Readers' Rig of the Year competition has begun, so send in your best caravanning pics for the chance to win a grand prize worth nearly $3600!

From now until 1 April 2026, we're on the lookout for the most impressive and travel-inspiring photos of caravanning setups.

We'll still be awarding a monthly Readers' Rigs prize, but come May 2026, one standout submission will be crowned the ultimate winner – taking home an incredible prize bundle.

HOW TO ENTER

It's easy – just scan the QR code to upload your image and provide a brief description of your van, vehicle and some info about where the image was taken and your travels.

Please note, images must be high quality and suitable for print (1MB+).

To find out more about the competition and to read the ful T&Cs, head to the *Caravan World* website and search Readers' Rig of the Year.

Don't miss out – enter now!

WHAT'S UP FOR GRABS?

Hema HX-2+ Navigator (Valued at $849.95)

Navigate with confidence on and off the beaten track with the Hema HX-2+ GPS Navigator. Now updated to include the innovative Hema 3D Explorer Map, turn-by-turn navigation and remote guidance. It is also pre-loaded with the all-new Hema Nav and Hema 4WD Maps powered by Memory Map© (subscription required), making it the ultimate tool for any Aussie adventurer. Find out more: hemamaps.com/pages/hx-2-plus-gps-navigator

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4WD MAPS

Luxury stay at BIG4 Yarra Valley Park Lane Holiday Park (Valued at $1180)

Enjoy a unique two-night escape in a beautifully restored 1930s tram at BIG4 Yarra Valley Park Lane Holiday Park. This spacious accommodation sleeps up to eight guests across three ensuite bedrooms and features a full kitchen, TV, Euro laundry, private deck with barbecue and a wood-fired hot tub.

While there, make the most of the park's swimming pools, bike pump tracks and playground before venturing into the Yarra Valley and surrounds to discover breathtaking landscapes, native wildlife, world-class wineries and more.

Bookings exclude school and public holidays. Find out more: big4.com.au

A sunrise Yarra Valley hot ballooning experience (Valued at $990)

Take to the skies in the Yarra Valley with Global Ballooning weekday sunrise hot air ballooning experience for two. Global Ballooning has been operating for more than 33 years over Melbourne, Yarra Valley and Mansfield. Owned and operated by a fourth-generation aviation family, the company has flown more than 120,000 passengers and received thousands of five-star reviews.

Find out more: globalballooning.com.au

T&Cs apply:

- *Valid to book within 12 months until May 2027*
- *Non-refundable*
- *Valid for Monday-Friday bookings (excl. public holidays)*
- *Valid for two people (must be booked together)*

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE GME MT610G Personal Locator Beacon; You can stay in a 1930s restored tram at BIG4 Yarra Valley Park Lane Holiday Park; Hema HX-2+ Navigator; Global Ballooning sunrise hot air balloon experience

GME MT610G Personal Locator Beacon (Valued at $429)

Having reliable communication equipment is essential for your safety when travelling Australia, and the GME MT610G 406MHz GPS Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is super compact and offers an impressive seven-year battery life and six-year warranty.

Featuring an integrated 72-channel GPS receiver, high-intensity LEDs, IP68 ingress protection and an inherently buoyant design (perfect for boating or swimming activities), the MT610G is designed to meet and exceed the latest international standards, ensuring enhanced peace of mind for the outdoor adventurer. Find out more: gme.net.au

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A HUGE THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

A massive shoutout to Hema Maps, Park Lane Group, Global Ballooning and GME for making this competition possible!

So, grab your camera and start snapping those adventure-worthy shots for the chance to score the ultimate prize giveaway!

G'DAY GROUP ACQUIRES CRADLE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS VILLAGE

G'day Group has further expanded its presence in one of Australia's most recognised tourist destinations with the acquisition of Cradle Mountain Wilderness Village.

Located directly adjacent to its existing tourist park, Discovery Parks - Cradle Mountain, the two properties will combine to become the region's premier accommodation and hospitality destination.

Featuring 45 chalet-style rooms and the award-winning Hellyers restaurant, Cradle Mountain Wilderness Village will complement the Discovery Parks property, which recently underwent a $20 million transformation to include more family-friendly cabins and new premium cabins.

G'day Group founder and chief executive officer, Grant Wilckens, said the move would enrich the visitor experience and enable the Group to capitalise on tourism demand in the region.

"Cradle Mountain is one of the most spectacular and iconic natural destinations in Australia and it continues to be a drawcard destination for both domestic and international travellers," Grant said.

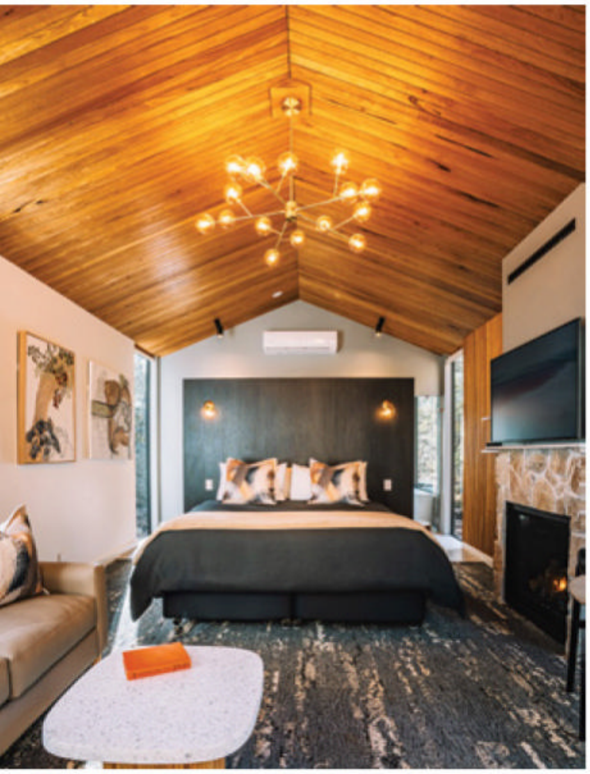
"With recent major investment in Discovery Parks - Cradle Mountain and now the acquisition of the Wilderness Village, we aim to position ourselves as the accommodation provider of choice in the region.

"We now offer options to cater to every budget and type of traveller – from overnight campsites for hikers and caravanners, to premium accommodation and dining for luxury travellers – enabling us to showcase this incredible destination to a diverse cohort of visitors.

"Importantly, we recognise the appeal of this destination is in its natural beauty and we are committed to operating with care and working in conjunction with Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service to enhance this appeal."

Cradle Mountain Wilderness Village will gradually be integrated with Discovery Parks - Cradle Mountain in order to minimise any disruption to the guest experience. There will be no changes to existing bookings.

The property will become known as Discovery Resorts - Cradle Mountain Village, joining the G'day Group's growing premium hospitality portfolio, which also includes El Questro, Lake Argyle and Rottnest Island in Western Australia, Wilpena Pound Resort and McCracken Resort in South Australia, Kings Canyon in the Northern Territory and Undara in Queensland.



ABOVE AND RIGHT Luxury cabin stay accomodation at Cradle Mountain; Enjoy a serene natural escape in one of Australia's most iconic destinations

FORD CONFIRMS PRICING AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR RANGER PHEV

ABOVE Prices and specs for the new Ford Ranger PHEV confirmed

Ford has confirmed the full price and specification of the Ranger Plug in Electric Hybrid Vehicle (PHEV) ahead of its Australian launch mid-2025.

If you missed our first look Ford's first PHEV, then check out our feature in issue 653 or online.

The MY25.75 Ranger PHEV line-up will consist of four variants starting from $71,990; XLT, Sport, Wildtrak and the special launch edition Stormtrak.

The price for all four models is:

Variant	Listed price
Ranger PHEV XLT	$71,990
Ranger PHEV Sport	$75,990
Ranger PHEV Wildtrak	$79,990
Ranger PHEV Stormtrak	$86,990

PRO POWER ONBOARD

Pro Power Onboard will be available for Australians for the first time with Ranger PHEV, with every variant in Australia coming equipped with the 'high output' 6.9kW system as standard.

With a single 10A 2.3kW socket in the cabin and twin 15A 3.45kW sockets in the tray, Pro Power Onboard uses the 11.8kWh battery to provide potentially hours of energy to worksite equipment, campsites or even a caravan directly from Ranger PHEV.

"Pro Power Onboard is a game changer for Ranger owners," said Phil Millar, Chief Program Engineer, Ford Ranger PHEV.

"Now instead of having to carry a heavy generator or batteries that take up precious room and can often be very noisy, a Ranger PHEV owner can plug virtually anything they might want to power directly into the vehicle itself."

"With 15A sockets in the tray, that's equivalent to having a powered caravan park site with you anywhere you might want to explore – the possibilities are almost endless!

"We've engineered Pro Power Onboard for maximum convenience in real-world situations. It functions with the car locked and when it is plugged in to charge, plus if the battery should deplete completely the 2.3L EcoBoost then kicks in to keep everything running."

TOWING AND PAYLOAD

The Ranger PHEV maintains the 3500kg braked towing capability that the nameplate has become famous for, and it is also able to carry more than any other PHEV dual-cab ute – with a payload that exceeds its nearest competitor by almost 200kg.

The gross vehicle mass (GVM) of 3500kg across the four-variant lineup means the Ranger PHEV boasts an impressive 973kg of payload (based on minimum kerb weight) in the XLT. Payload figures for the Sport, Wildtrak and Stormtrak are 934kg, 885kg, and 808kg respectively.

Adding the hybrid powertrain brings unique benefits when the Ranger PHEV is hitched up and towing a load. For example, the Ranger PHEV features exceptional launch capability from a standstill due to the additional torque from the electric motor – this can be particularly handy when towing a heavy van up a hill or hauling a boat out of the water at a boat ramp.

"We know how important carrying and towing heavy loads is to our Ranger customers, so this was a top priority in the development of Ranger PHEV," Millar added.

"But there is more to safe towing and hauling ability than numbers on a spec sheet – we've also ensured Ranger PHEV comes fitted with class-leading technology like our integrated trailer brake controller.

"Beyond just a simple trailer brake controller, the Ranger PHEV's system is fully integrated with the rest of its active safety suite, meaning features like the electronic stability control factor in the trailer's brakes and activate them as necessary."

Clever tech like the Trailer Light Check is standard across the range, while Pro Trailer Back-Up Assist is optional on Sport variants and standard on Wildtrak and Stormtrak.

The gross combined mass (GCM) for the Ranger PHEV has also been revealed, coming in at 6580kg, confirming our guesses that it would beat the current Rangers range which tops out 6400kg.

POWERTRAIN

Ranger PHEV adds a fifth powertrain option to the Ranger lineup, combining a 2.3L turbocharged four-cylinder EcoBoost petrol engine with a 75kW electric motor (e-motor) and 11.8kWh (usable) battery that delivers the offroad and towing capability that Ranger customers need for work and play.

Combining both the combustion and electric power results in maximum total system outputs of 207kW at 4600rpm, and 697Nm at 2500rpm. The 2.3L petrol engine is tuned for optimised hybrid efficiency and produces 138kW at 4600rpm, and 411Nm at 2700rpm.

A new Modular Hybrid Transmission (MHT) integrates Ranger PHEV's e-motor between the engine and transmission, allowing for a range of hybrid and EV modes that owners can use to tailor their driving experience to meet their specific needs. The traction battery is packaged between specially engineered frame rails underneath the rear loadbox.

The MHT allows the Ranger PHEV to benefit from the same go-anywhere abilities of the existing Ranger line-up, with a mechanical transfer case ensuring both axles can deliver the required power to all four wheels – even when climbing steep and rugged hills.

Further information: ford.com.au

Image: Locklan Gilbert
Great Australian Bight

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RIGHT TEMPUR mattresses on Jayco's 2025 range

GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP ON THE ROAD

Whether at home or on the road with your van, quality sleep is essential.

Jayco Australia has partnered with leading sleep technology brand TEMPUR to bring unparalleled comfort to road-trippers across the country.

Jayco has introduced TEMPUR's renowned pressure-relieving technology into its most luxurious models, making restless nights and uncomfortable mattresses a thing of the past and setting a new benchmark for premium travel.

Premium all-terrain and Silverline models will feature TEMPUR's advanced sleep solutions, ensuring that travellers can enjoy the same level of comfort on the road as they do at home.

Product innovation and sales manager at Jayco, Scott Jones said: "At Jayco, we are committed to enhancing every aspect of the travel experience, and sleep plays a crucial role in that. Partnering with TEMPUR allows us to offer our customers the ultimate in comfort and support, so they can wake up refreshed and ready for adventure."

With decades of expertise in developing sleep solutions trusted by astronauts and elite athletes alike, TEMPUR brings industry-leading innovation to the caravan market. The brand's proprietary material, originally developed by NASA, adapts to the body's shape, weight and temperature, providing personalised support and pressure relief.

Jason Nicholas, managing director of TEMPUR Australia and New Zealand said "Our mission is to improve the sleep of more people, every night. This partnership with Jayco allows us to bring the benefits of TEMPUR's advanced sleep technology to the growing community of travellers who demand both adventure and luxury. Whether in the outback or by the coast, we believe no one should have to compromise on quality sleep."

For more information: jayco.com.au / au.tempur.com

UPDATES TO 2025 CHEVROLET SILVERADO HD

The Chevrolet Silverado 2500 HD has been revised for 2025 with a series of style and design updates.

Among the key changes are a new-look exterior, with blacked-out front and rear bumpers, red recovery hooks and stunning 20in high-gloss black alloy wheels with black centre caps.

Personalisation has also been improved, with the Silverado 2500 HD LTZ now offered in a total of six exterior colours – Cypress Grey, Radiant Red, Sterling Grey Metallic, Summit White, Lakeshore Blue and Black – up from four hues in 2024.

While the changes are an evolution of the Chevrolet Silverado HD LTZ, they build on the impressive equipment list already applied to GMSV's flagship pickup truck.

That includes the powerful 6.6L Duramax Turbo Diesel V8 engine, producing a total 350kW of power and 1322Nm of torque. Those impressive outputs contribute to its 4500kg braked towing capacity, which, along with trailer-equipped Adaptive Cruise Control, GM's In-Vehicle Trailering App with Trailer Profiles and its large vertical power-adjustable trailering mirrors, ensure the Silverado 2500 HD is a standout in the towing space.

The Silverado 2500 HD continues to combine capability with luxurious comfort, with leather-appointed seating that's heated and ventilated in the front, heated in the rear, not to mention a heated leather steering wheel, powered sunroof and powered seating in the front.

There is a sizeable 25.7in of screens across the infotainment system and driver information, while Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and a seven-speaker Bose® Premium Sound System have the rest of your driving experience covered.

Chevrolet Silverado pricing 2025 (AUS)	
Silverado 2500 HD	$166,500*
Chevrolet Silverado 1500 ZR2	$141,500*
Chevrolet Silverado 1500 LTZ Premium Tech Pack	$130,500*
Prestige paint	$1250

**Pricing includes GST but excludes dealer delivery, government charges, on-road costs and optional extras*

BELOW The 2025 Chevrolet Silverado HD will have some serious updates

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VICPARKS IS NOW CARAVAN & RESIDENTIAL PARKS VICTORIA

The peak industry body representing more than 80 per cent of Victoria's tourist and residential park operators has changed its business name from VicParks to Caravan & Residential Parks Victoria.

"Our new name better reflects the growing residential parks sector which is offering affordable home ownership opportunities through land lease communities," association CEO, Scott Parker said.

"It also clears up confusion with the statutory authority Parks Victoria and Caravan Industry Victoria which represents caravan manufacturers, retailers and service providers."

Established in 1964 as the Victorian Caravan Parks Association Incorporated by a group of concerned caravan park owners fighting unfair regulatory change, government advocacy remains a key pillar of the organisation more than 60 years on.

"We need to ensure both the government and opposition recognise the importance of this industry to regional economies where more than 50 per cent of overnight stays are in caravan parks," Scott said.

"The importance of tourist and residential parks was confirmed by a BDO Australia report which found that in the financial year 2021, the industry contributed $2.4 billion to Victoria's Gross State Product and supported more than 17,000 jobs."

Caravan & Residential Parks Victoria recently strengthened its advocacy power through the appointment of two new senior staff. Rod Hearn is the association's general manager, residential and Gary Anderton is general manager, tourism.

"Rod has joined us with extensive senior experience in the land lease community and broader residential and holiday park sectors and is a significant addition to the team having already developed a comprehensive suite of recommendations for change to make Victoria a more desirable state for land lease development investment," Scott said.

"Gary comes with a wealth of experience in very senior political advocacy, strategy, research and policy development roles within government and opposition and has made an immediate impact on our capacity to represent tourist park members and the way we engage our members," he added.

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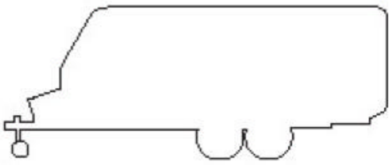

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ABOVE Book ahead and help protect the Shire of Exmouth

EXMOUTH CALL FOR CONSCIOUS TRAVEL IN 2025

The Shire of Exmouth in Western Australia has announced its participation in the 2025 Top Tourism Town Awards with a heartfelt call to action for travellers to explore the wonders of Ningaloo consciously and responsibly.

The Shire is emphasising the importance of travellers planning ahead and securing bookings before arrival, ensuring a seamless and sustainable experience both for visitors and the local environment.

By encouraging pre-booked travel, the Shire aims to manage visitor numbers effectively, ensuring the delicate balance between tourism and conservation is maintained.

The 2025 submission highlights Exmouth's dedication to sustainable tourism practices, showcasing initiatives aimed at minimising environmental impact and recognising the region's natural wonders.

After achieving three consecutive gold wins in Western Australia, induction into the Tourism Council Western Australia Hall of Fame and two national gold awards as Australia's Top Tourism Town (population under 5000), Exmouth is again showcasing its unique charm and commitment, while highlighting the need of environmental preservation.

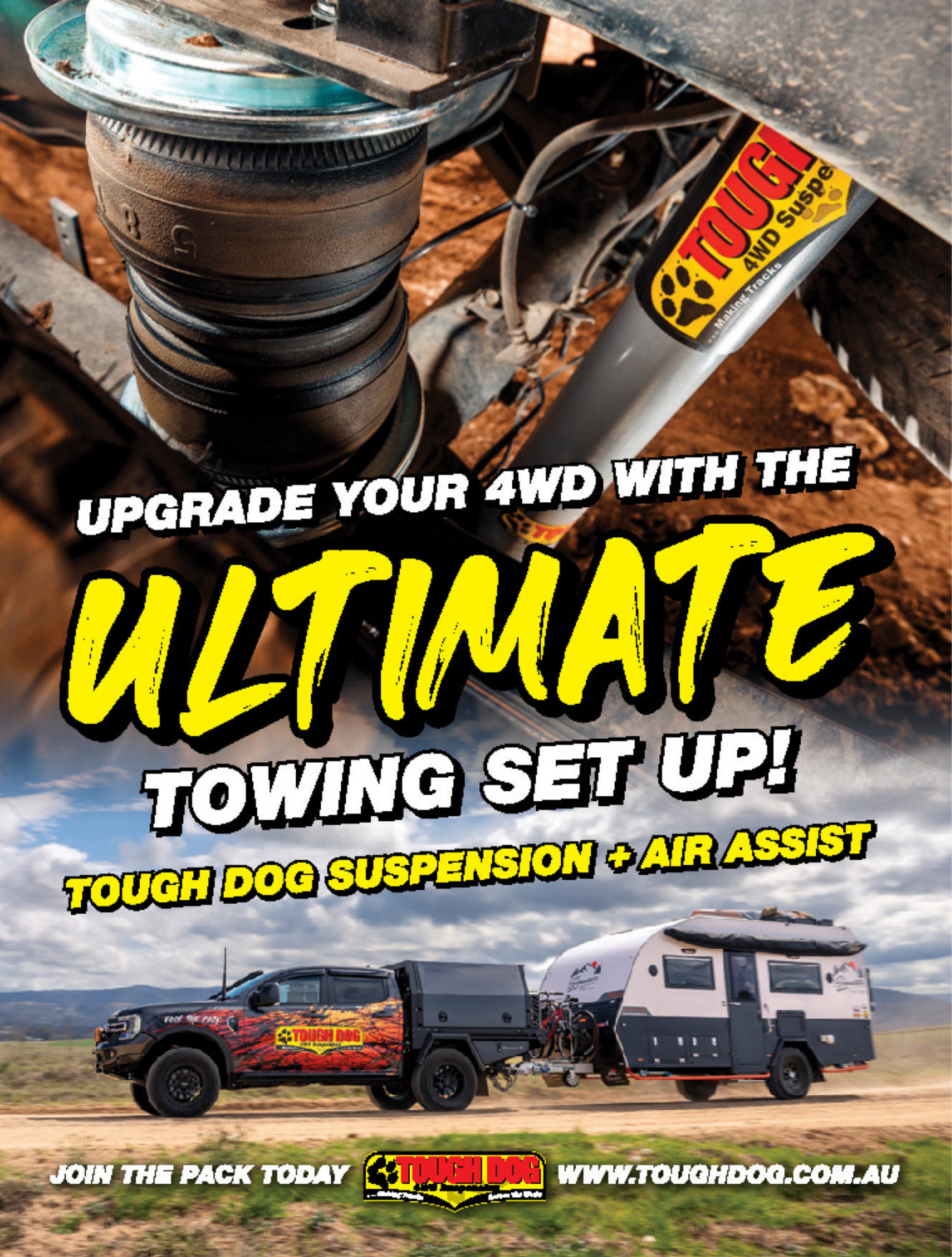
The Shire of Exmouth's participation in the 2025 Top Tourism Town Awards is a testament to its ongoing commitment to sustainable tourism and its dedication to preserving the natural beauty of the Ningaloo region, and it actively encourages locals and visitors to participate in the Top Tourism Town Awards voting process, joining the collective effort to champion responsible tourism.

"We love sharing the unparalleled beauty of Exmouth with visitors from around the globe," Shire president, Matt Niikkula said.

"However, we also recognise our responsibility to safeguard this precious environment for future generations. This year, we're focusing on promoting eco-conscious travel, litter prevention and the importance of choosing approved accommodation solutions, particularly designated camping areas that align with the North West Cape's carrying capacity."

"We are calling on the support of locals and visitors alike and invite everyone to participate in the voting for the Top Tourism Town Awards and join us in championing responsible tourism. We would love to welcome you to Exmouth – with a booking – to experience the magic of Ningaloo in a way that respects our environment and supports our community."

To vote visit: toptourismtownwa.com.au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AVIDA RV CELEBRATES 60 YEARS

With
MALCOLM STREET

Malcolm checks out one of Avida RV's latest motorhomes, the Explorer LX 4X4, released as part of the brand's 60th anniversary celebrations.

Avida RV is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, which is something of a milestone in the recreational vehicle industry in Australia. During those 60 years, the company has produced plenty of motorhomes and, more recently, caravans.

It hasn't all been plain sailing, of course. Bruce Binns founded the company, then known as Freeway Camper Company. Slide-ons were an early product, but campervans and motorhomes soon followed. Financial difficulties almost saw the company disappear, but it didn't, and Winnebago Industries (no connection to the US manufacturer of the same name nor the current holder of the name in Australia) arose out of the ashes. In 2012, another name change was made because of legal action by Winnebago in America. Avida RV was the name change and is still with us today as a leading motorhome manufacturer in Australia and New Zealand. These days the manufacturer, based at Emu Plains in western Sydney, is in the hands of Bruce Binns' son Ben and daughter Sam.

As part of the 60th celebrations, Avida is producing a few new motorhome designs. Not so long ago, one of the first out of the factory was an Avida Explorer LX 4X4. Based on the Mercedes Benz Sprinter 419 MWB AWD, it's not a big motorhome but is designed for undertaking rough road/offroad travel in some style. The 140kW 2.0L turbo diesel, nine-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel drive feature give all the required tractive effort. That makes the van ideal for Avida's Explorer conversion.

For the keen offroader, Avida had a few notable options available, such as alloy wheels, all-terrain tyres, a bullbar with a Warn winch, driving lights and a snorkel. There's no gas system, but the Explorer is well equipped with a pair of 200Ah lithium batteries, a 3000W inverter and a 400W solar panel. The water and space heater has a 10L capacity and is diesel-fired.

What's unusual about the Explorer is the moulded pod fitted to the rear offside window. It's something I haven't seen for a while and is 180mm (7in) deep. It's designed to allow for a longer bed inside.

Van conversions have a finite amount of interior space, and Avida has made the best of what's available. The Explorer has a fairly standard layout for this size van. There's a seat and table behind the driver's seat, making the van a four-seater. There's a kitchen bench on the nearside, partly in the doorway, a bathroom on the opposite side and an east-west bed across the rear.

The bed is longer (1.85m/6ft 1in) and also higher than usual. This design feature is included to give more storage space under the bed, including the Victron integrated electrics. Another feature of the rear bed is that the mid-section can be lifted so that something like a bicycle or two can be strapped in.

The kitchen bench is quite small, but there's enough room for an under-bench 90L compressor fridge and a stainless-steel sink. The induction hob's benefit is that it can be used inside or outside and put away when not in use.

Although not a hardcore 4WD vehicle, the Mercedes Sprinter base of this motorhome is quite the vehicle for getting to remote places. It has plenty of traction and could be used easily on both muddy roads and terrain like NSW's Snowy Mountains in winter, something I have booked it up for. For this trip, I took it to the Capertee Valley, west of the Blue Mountains, NSW, and it was quite a pleasant drive. The Explorer is one good way to celebrate Avida's 60th year.

ABOVE AND RIGHT The Avida Explorer is designed to take on rough roads; Comfortable living inside and outside

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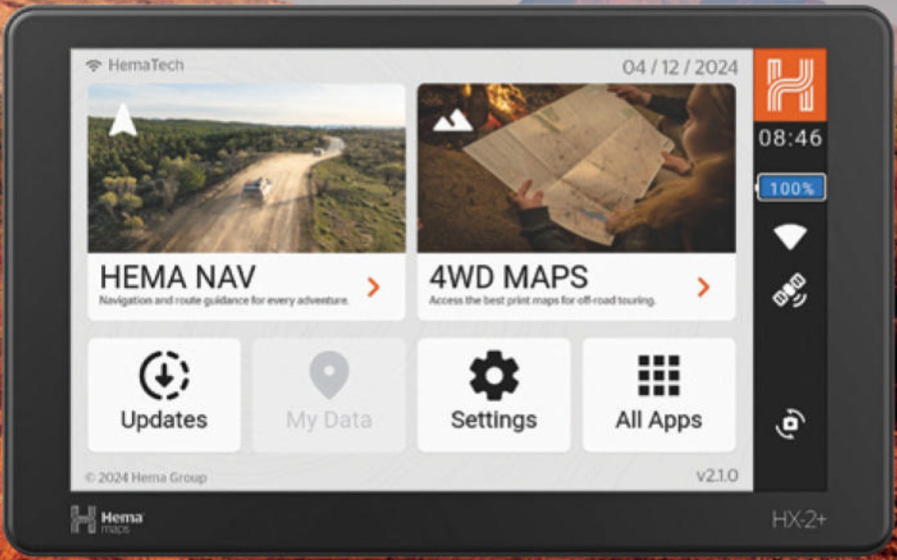
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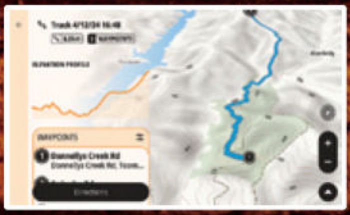

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UPGRADING TO LITHIUM BATTERIES

With
DAVID BAYLISS

This month David answers a question from a reader who has recently installed lithium batteries in his caravan.

Q Hi David,

My wife and I own a 2019 Jayco Silverline caravan which is fitted with a BMPRO J35, model C. With your experience with BMPRO I am hoping you can advise me of which direction to go.

I installed two lithium batteries from iTechworld before a recent trip to Western Australia. I was told that the batteries were a drop-in swap and that my charging system did not need to be changed. I now know that is not correct. The BMPRO model C does not recognise the lithium batteries, and it also has no capacity to receive charge from the car.

I have rectified this by fitting a REDARC DC-DC charger to my van. Because the lithium batteries do not show a voltage drop until they are nearly dead flat, the solar panels also did not provide charge. I have been advised that a model D will work and recognise and charge the lithium batteries? I would also like to know if the Bluetooth node 102 is compatible to monitor the battery status? Thank you in advance for your expertise.

Regards,
Russell Breguet

A Hi Russell,

Yes, unfortunately it can be a bit of a minefield trying to bring together the right system to meet your needs and there is a fair bit of misinformation out there. Hopefully we can identify some key points here to make it easier.

Lithium batteries require proper charging profile to maximise their lifetime and your investment. Here's why you should only charge a 12V lithium battery with a charger specifically designed for lithium batteries and not a standard lead-acid charger such as the BMPRO J35C.

Lithium and lead-acid batteries require very different charging algorithms:

- Lead-acid batteries use a multi-stage charging process (bulk, absorption, float) and can tolerate trickle charging or being left on the charger
- Lithium batteries typically need a constant current/constant voltage (CC/CV) approach and do not benefit from trickle or float charging — in fact, it can damage the battery or reduce its lifespan
- Lithium batteries have an inbuilt battery management system (BMS). This is a set of electronics that monitors charge to the internal cells, cell voltages and provide a range of fault protections. A lithium-specific charger is often designed to work with the BMS, ensuring safe and efficient charging. A lead-acid charger may confuse or conflict with the BMS.

It is possible to upgrade your J35C to the capabilities of a D version through the BMPRO upgrade program. Check out the website for more details. Your current unit needs to be removed and then sent away for an upgrade. As part of this, it receives additional warranty. The returned unit will then be set as lithium ready, and you will need to utilise the settings through the screen or app to ensure you set the right battery capacity so that it can effectively monitor battery state of charge.

It's great that you have upgraded your DC-DC capabilities as the J35 series can only provide a trickle charge through its DC-DC input and can't compete with the newer vehicle smart chargers to boost voltage and charge a battery properly on the go. I suggest that you install the BC300 external shunt to ensure that all current that goes into the battery directly from the DC charger is captured in the charging algorithm. In addition, the DC charger should be providing MPPT solar charging to keep the batteries topped up. If not, you can always wire the solar panels into the integrated BMPRO system which has its own proprietary charging algorithms.

In regard to the communications and brains trust of the system — the Control Node — it will need to be upgraded to the latest version of 103. This will also enable a range of new features such as the integration of gas bottle, temperature and tyre pressure monitor system (TPMS) sensors, increased Bluetooth range and more. This device is more of a communication device and will leave the battery monitoring to either the J35 or the BC300.

I trust this has helped in bringing together the story for a more intricate system that allows you more power options and extended off-grid camping options. One closing piece of advice is that as your system continues to evolve, try to bring together as many parts from one brand as possible, as this enables a higher chance of compatibility for the entire system, therefore, maximising your investment and opportunities.

Safe travels,
12V Guru

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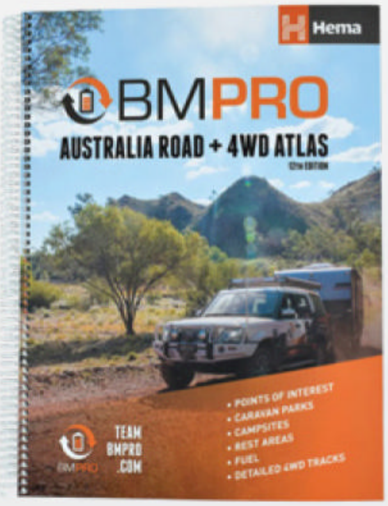

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With
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LESSONS LEARNED FROM QUEENSLAND

In the lead up to the Federal election, the CIAA calls on major parties to commit to a vision of robust road networks.

Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred had everyone in South-East Queensland jumping – leaving thousands of people cut off from healthcare, hospitals, grocery stores and other essential services both in the lead up and in the aftermath of the storm.

Yet it seems to me that when our regional communities get cut off from the rest of Australia, city folk don't bat an eyelid. As the CEO of Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA), I've learned that roads are so much more than asphalt strips connecting point A to point B. They are the arteries that bring life to regional communities and caravan destinations alike.

Too often, we only look at roads through the lens of the holidaymaker – the grey nomads and families chasing sunsets in their vans, stopping for coffee in a country cafe or settling in at a friendly caravan park.

That's part of it, yes – but there's more. When our roads fail, it's not just a holiday disrupted; it is deliveries delayed, businesses suffering, emergency services slowed. And in a crisis, that delay can be the difference between safety and tragedy. Our nation's arteries importance as carrying the regions' lifeblood cannot be understated enough.

Recent events have driven this point home all too clearly. Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred alone was estimated in the 2025 federal budget to cost the government $1.2 billion in lost activity due to submerged roads and business closures.

Meanwhile, our friends in Southwest Queensland have endured brutal floods that devastated entire communities – the worst flood for the region in 50 years in fact. Roads that weren't yet submerged were destroyed beyond repair, leaving a giant recovery bill for locals to pick up. Yet there's barely a peep from government as to how we can support these communities; so, when a flood like this inevitably happens again, communities know what to expect from their leaders.

The story is no different further north. In December 2023, Severe Tropical Cyclone Jasper tore through Far North Queensland, causing extensive damage. The Insurance Council of Australia placed insured losses at roughly $1 billion, while Cairns Regional Council has identified more than $113 million in damage to public assets. Local businesses took a hammering: 41.8 per cent of affected businesses lost between $10,000 and $50,000 and 12.8 per cent reported hits of $100,000-$500,000. For a region that relies so heavily on tourism, the cumulative blow to the visitor economy has been profound.

We have seen this movie before. During the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-2020, tourism operators suffered immediate losses of $2.8 billion, with longer-term effects still being counted years later. Disasters differ, but the pattern is identical: a single blocked road can choke an entire local economy.

Several businesses I've spoken to over the past few months have told me their guests are forced to re-route or turn back; goods can't be delivered and emergency crews find themselves battling not just the disaster but also the inability to reach those who need help most.

A couple of caravanners I met also told me their trip north was cut short from a broken bridge – leading to a six-hour trip back home. That's why funding models like the 80-20 approach – where the Federal Government shoulders 80 per cent of infrastructure costs, as we've seen with bipartisan commitments to the Bruce Highway – matter more than ever. On paper, it's a powerful way to build resilience. However, it needs more than talk. It needs action. It needs follow-through.

It's almost tradition for major parties to roll out a 'record road investment' commitment at election time, but very rarely do we actually see these commitments come to fruition. We can try to throw money at roads as part of a photo op, but at the end of the day we need to ensure our roads are supported and that cannot be forgotten in a world of clicks and politicking.

After all, a dependable road network is indispensable for communities near and far. Imagine caravanners encountering smooth highways and well-kept arterials, free from the damage that can come with floods or bushfires. The safety and peace of mind speak for themselves. Now think of a scenario where a single route is blocked for days or weeks. That doesn't just inconvenience a few weekend travellers – it strands vital supplies, hampers emergency response teams and deals an economic blow to caravan parks and local businesses who rely on that steady flow of visitors.

The upcoming election offers a moment of reckoning. If those aspiring to lead are serious about supporting Australian industries – whether that's caravanning, logistics, local manufacturing, or beyond – they must commit to a vision of robust road networks that can withstand modern challenges. It's about building true national resilience: ensuring rescue vehicles can reach disaster zones swiftly, making sure groceries and other essentials can get to caravan parks and townships, and keeping the caravans rolling for the many Australians who cherish the freedom of the open road.

Ultimately, this isn't just about caravanning; it's about safeguarding communities, livelihoods and lives. Whether or not governments realise it, the decisions they make now will echo throughout the entire country beyond the current political cycle. Because in the end, this isn't just about caravans or holidays. It's about people. It's about families who've built their lives in the bush, small businesses keeping main streets alive, and the everyday Australians who count on our roads to keep them moving – and to bring them safely home.

Stuart Lamont
Chief Executive Officer

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WATER CONVERTERS

✉ Hi John,

I enjoy your question-and-answer segment in the *Caravan World* magazine. It's a great source of fabulous information and I want to thank you and congratulate you on a great service to the 4x4 car and caravan community. Well done!

My question is: What do you think of the value for money technology of endless water supply via humidity to water converters? Do you think they're necessary if you're only caravanning at remote spots for a maximum three days for two people in a medium offroad caravan? Or should I just carry more water in the 4x4?

And the offroad map book looks great too.

Regards,
Cosmas Geaney

A *Hi Cosmas,*

Thanks for your kind words. I'm pleased you like the magazine. We saw this water-making technology in the incredible Kokoda van at the latest Caravan of the Year event, and it's an excellent innovation for off-grid living. The tech is new as applied to caravans, and it's relatively expensive. It also requires vast amounts of electrical power, so the van's overall weight will suffer.

We will have a report on one of the first commercially available systems in the next issue, so watch out for that to get a better handle on how it will work. If you are heading bush for three days, you would be better off with the water tanks currently in most offroad vans. I'd take a 20L drum of drinking water as a backup and be prepared for quick showers.

Safe travels,
John

LETTER
OF THE
MONTH

BACK TO BASICS

✉ G'day John,

With a lot of caravans having as many modern conveniences as most houses these days, I sometimes wonder why people opt to go camping.

They pull up in their big expensive vans, turn on the air-conditioner and the cable TV, hook up to Starlink and stay inside. You never see them. With a bathroom on board, you don't even pass them on the way to and from the shower block.

Maybe I'm old school, but sitting under your caravan awning on a hot summer's night watching the sun set with a cold beer and having the occasional chat with your fellow campers is one of life's great pleasures and why my wife and I love caravanning so much.

Call me a Scrooge, but I yearn for the simpler times. Love your magazine and look forward to it every month.

Cheers,
Gazza

A *Hi Gazza,*

If I had a van like some of the latest versions we reviewed recently at Caravan of the Year, I'd be tempted to cosy up inside to enjoy the luxury. Each to their own, I guess, and I've long given up on working out why people do what they do. Be grateful that the caravanners who are out and about will probably be up for a yarn. We have met lifelong friends when travelling in our van. Those locked away inside will have their reasons, and it's best to leave them to their own devices.

Regards,
John

LITHIUM BATTERY FIRES

✉ Hi John,

I've seen a few horror videos on social media recently of people's caravans which have supposedly inexplicably burst into flames, leaving them stranded on holiday or out of pocket because they weren't insured.

Everyone who comments on social media has an opinion of course, most of which will be incorrect, particularly those who liken lithium batteries in caravans to the cheap Chinese versions you find on e-scooters and which we see regularly catch fire.

As a voice of authority in the sector, it would be great if *Caravan World* could provide some clarity about the differences between the various types of lithium batteries and provide some reassurance for campers like me in older vans (pre-December 2023) who sleep with lithium batteries under their beds.

Thanks,
Carl Oliver

A *Hi Carl,*

Thanks for your letter. Fire safety is something we should all prioritise in a caravan, and you are right that there is much confusion around lithium batteries. As a general caution around a blaze in a van, it's prudent to have an escape plan for a quick exit.

Many reports of caravan fires attribute the blaze to a lithium battery, but there never seems to be clarity around which battery. Our modern collection of lithium batteries includes torches, computers, phones, e-bikes, boom boxes and so on, leaving plenty of suspects for the cause of the fire.

Most caravan house batteries are now lithium iron phosphate – LiFePo4 – and they *are considered the safest of the lithium range. Compared to early versions, they are less likely to overheat or short-circuit. The problem with lithium battery fires is that once they start, it's tough to stop them in a process called thermal runaway. The gases produced are highly toxic, so keep well away. Even though LiFePo4 batteries are considered safe, they will catch fire in the heat of a burning caravan, and the gases are among the most dangerous.*

Current caravan design rules prioritise the electrical system's safety, locating batteries in separate storage spaces that are vented outside and protected from heat sources and physical damage.

While having a battery in a habitable area under the bed isn't compliant under current rules, being aware of some commonsense precautions is more appropriate than being alarmed. We need to ensure that both the battery and the charging system are properly maintained and professionally installed.

It's appropriate to talk about some general issues around lithium batteries.

Most experts recommend employing a professional if you upgrade your system to lithium. The circuit requires adequate cable size, proper fusing and a suitable charging and monitoring installation.

As a general rule, we should understand that all portable lithium-powered devices are a safety concern. We should always use the correct charger, never overcharge and never leave them overnight. Don't charge or store e-bikes at the exit to your caravan.

The fire extinguisher in your van will not contain a lithium battery fire, so the priority is to get out of the van to safety and again, having a preplanned exit strategy for such a situation makes sense.

Safe travels,
John

TASSIE MISSING OUT

Hi John,

I note that there are far fewer travel stories in *Caravan World* about Tasmania and the caravanning delights available on the Apple Isle and wonder if this is because it's so difficult to get your van and tow vehicle across Bass Strait.

Bookings to take a van and car on a return trip on the *Spirit of Tasmania* are sold out months in advance – forget trying to visit during the warmer months, it's impossible. And if you do manage to find a vacancy it costs a small fortune for the privilege.

I thought the whole reasoning behind the move from Port Melbourne to Geelong was to enable greater capacity for extra ships, therefore moving more passengers who want to visit Tassie.

Poor old Tassie is missing out on a great big piece of the caravanning pie because we can't get over there!

Regards,
Elly Watkins

A *Hi Elly,*

You aren't alone with a desire to visit Tasmania with your van. We recently published travel stories on the Apple Isle, and I agree it's a fantastic location.

There were big plans to upgrade the ferries on the Bass Strait route, but things fell apart when it was realised the two new ships commissioned for the crossing didn't have a suitable berth in Devonport, Tas. They were too big. The first ship, the Spirit of Tasmania *IV has been berthed in Scotland but is heading to home base soon. The second one is under construction in Finland. The Tasmanian Government hopes to have the new terminal operating by early 2027.*

Cheers,
John

WIN! THIS PRIZE FOR JUNE TIEGEAR PACK

To help you prepare for your upcoming adventures, we're offering an exciting prize for the winner of Letter of the Month in the June issue of *Caravan World*: a TIEGEAR Caravan Pack.

The TIEGEAR Caravan Pack comes with two 4m reflective guy ropes (with attached mesh bag to store excess) and two soft springs for fast and easy securing of your caravan awning. The pack also comes with a sturdy mesh zippered gear bag to keep everything neat and tidy when not in use. It's a very handy bit of gear to have in your caravanning setup.

How to win

Simply send your technical, towing or caravan-related questions or advice and great travel stories to **submissions@hemagroup.com.au** with 'Postbag' or 'Tech Talk' in the subject line or send a letter to Caravan World Postbag, 3 Wyman Place, Braeside, Vic 3195. All entries must include your full address (not for publication).

TRAVEL HAPPY

SEND PICS TO WIN

We shine the spotlight on caravanners, their rigs and their travel tales.

This pic of a Volkswagen Amarok towing a New Age Oz Classic van was submitted by Michelle Farquhar.
"We took this while on our way home to Ballarat from Port Fairy, Victoria."

Roger Bentley sent in this pic of his Toyota LandCruiser 200 Series and Goldstream RV crossing the Roper River in the Northern Territory.
"We spent two tranquil nights here being careful of the crocodiles."

"Camping at Wuruma Dam, Qld, with my wife Carol and dog Otto. A great getaway — red claw crays, fishing and kayaking. What more could you ask for?"
Thanks Albert Grilanc for sending in this pic of your 19ft Big Red ES2 and 2017 Toyota LandCruiser 200 Series GX diesel.

Steve Pennington sent in this pic of his beachside camp at Goulet Bluff not far from Denham, Western Australia.
"We have a 23ft Crusader Prince van towed with our 2012 LandCruiser 200 Series. This was part of our trip around Australia and we loved all of it."

WIN!

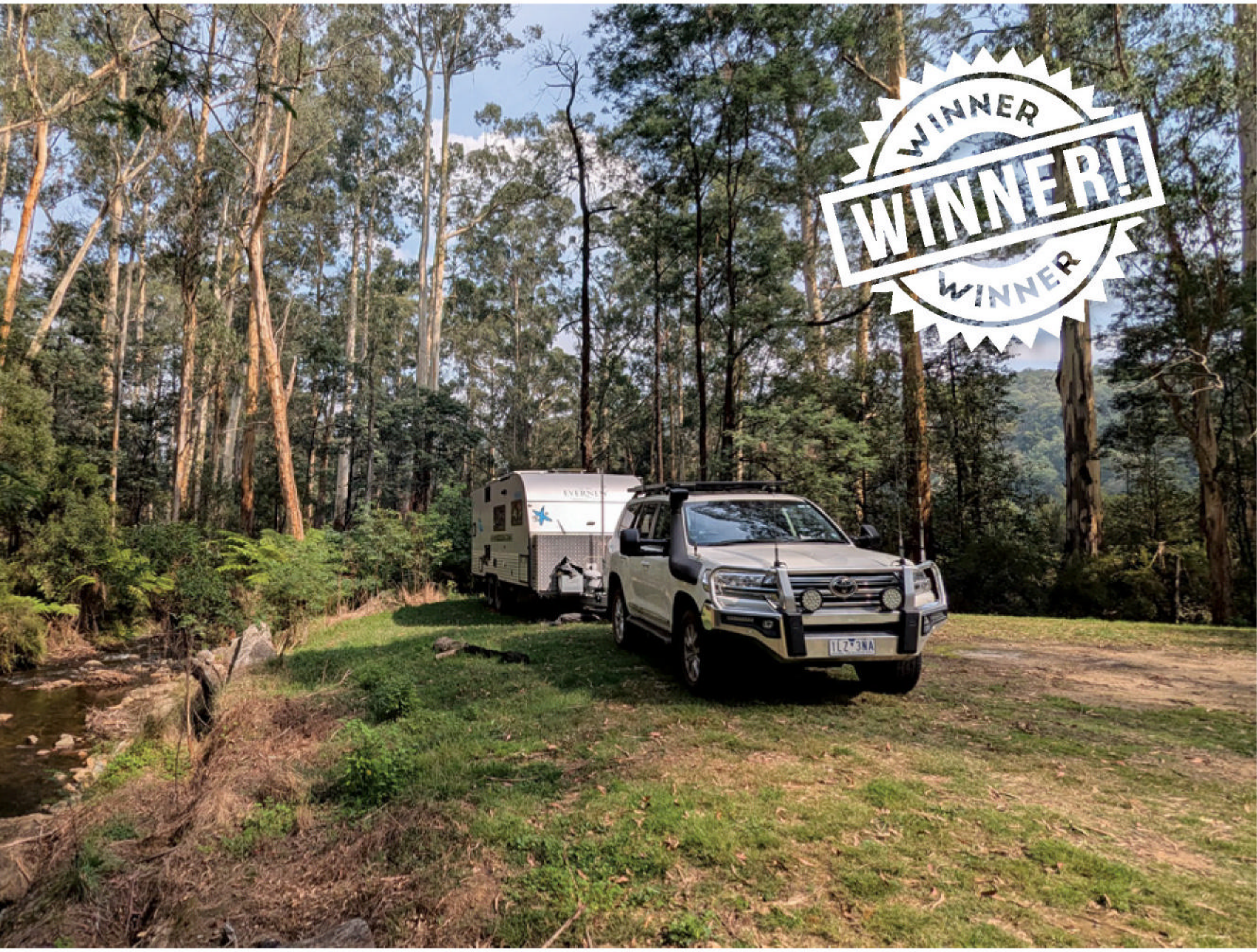
WIN OUR MONTHLY PRIZE!

We've got a new and exciting monthly prize for Readers Rigs'! From this month onwards the monthly winner will receive a random **Hema Maps Explorer Pack** featuring handy atlases, guides and region and state/territory maps with a handy fabric wallet to keep it all organised. **For more information about the Hema Maps Explorer Packs and other bundles, visit hemamaps.com**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
4WD+CAMPING
Escapes
Perth

Mark Diggins is this month's winner with this pic of his Evernew caravan and LandCruiser 200 Series.

"This was taken in Caringal, Vic, next to the Tyers River on a warm autumn day while we caught the last of daylight saving."



HOW TO WIN

Just scan the QR code to submit your most travel-inspiring picture (2-3Mb) of your rig along with a brief description. All entries until 1 April 2026 will be in the running for a monthly prize and the big Readers' Rig of the Year prize giveaway **worth almost $3600**, to be announced in May 2026 (head to page 10 for more info).

Photo submissions may also appear on *Caravan World* socials and caravanworld.com.au

MSA 4X4

TOWING MIRRORS

NOW WITH CAMERA PROVISION

When extended the large, single mirror allows the driver to see beyond the caravan, trailer or boat and avoids the confusion of multi-lens mirrors for everyday driving.

TAKE US WITH YOU®

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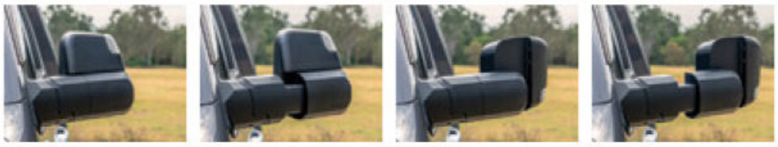
Available from over 800 stockists Australia wide.

Four mirror positions to suit all driving situations...



Position 1 Position 2 Position 3 Position 4

MSA Towing Mirrors mount onto a vehicle in the same position as the existing mirrors.

Please check surroundings for safety.

Ford Ranger PY Model Shown

CAMERA PROVISION*

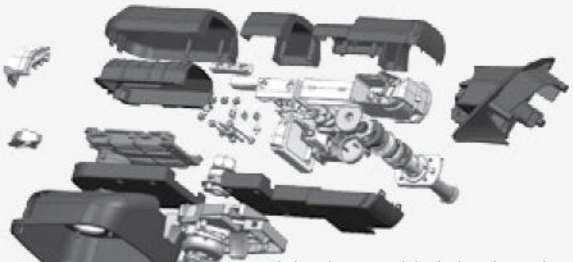
Headset display will provide the same view as the existing factory fitted mirrors.

**Selected vehicle models ONLY.*

MSA prides itself on being at the leading edge of industry trends and it is our vision to stay there. The camera feature in towing mirrors, has long been a topic of discussion in the 4WD, caravanning and adventure industry. The MSA team has recently finalised the implementation of the camera provision into the highly popular MSA POWER FOLD™ Towing Mirrors Range.

These mirrors share the same SEMA award-winning, large single-mirror design that has made MSA Towing Mirrors so popular among 4WD and adventure enthusiasts. The only visual difference is the integration of the camera housing into the design. The mirror head pivots on a heavy-duty extension slide attached to a solid base and the extension slide allows the mirror to extend out when towing and return to a standard driving position, when not re equired. All MSA Towing Mirrors are ADR compliant, covered by a manufacturers 5 Year Warranty and available in black or chrome.

SHOP NOW



Injection moulded plastic and die cast aluminium components deliver a high-quality towing mirror to withstand Australian conditions!

FEATURES

- Factory camera provision
- Power fold at the touch of a button
- Four different mirror positions
- Large, single mirror lens
- Adjustable viewing angles
- Vertical and horizontal adjustment
- Unique pivot design
- Fold inwards or outwards
- ADR Compliant
- Injection moulded plastic and die-cast aluminium components

CARAVAN SAFETY 101

Caravan safety is a prime concern for us at Caravan World. *With ever increasing numbers of new caravanners on the road, here are our 10 tips for a safer drive.*

1 KNOW YOUR CAPABILITY

Before hitting the road, make sure you are ready for the challenge. Towing a caravan poses unique challenges and requires different skills than driving a standalone vehicle. Caravans have a considerable impact on the handling and braking capabilities of the towing vehicle. If you have yet to tow, it's wise to seek training or advice from an experienced driver. Practice on a safe backroad to feel how the caravan and vehicle combination move when cornering and braking. Confidence comes with practice and makes better, safer towing.

2 DON'T RUSH

Don't be cajoled into doing something you aren't confident in doing. Sure, it's best to go with the traffic flow out on the highway, but only if you feel safe. Stay in your lane, keep speed constant and signal your intention in plenty of time. Allow more time for your trip. Even with years of towing experience, you won't go as quickly as without a van hitched up. Some states have a limit for van and vehicle combinations (GVM) of over 4.5T of 100km/h. A lot can happen if things go pear-shaped at high speed, so many experienced drivers consider 100km/h the maximum safe speed. We agree. That bloke who overtook you towing a van and speeding off into the distance at 110km/h might think he has everything in hand. Well, he has, until he hasn't. There isn't a recreational vehicle on the road designed to tow a 3T van at high speed, so why should you.

Of course, once you are confident, keeping up a reasonable pace is essential to traffic flow. Many experts recommend around 90km/h as a good compromise on the open road.

Remember, there's a much heavier load to slow down when descending long hills. Consider using a low gear and don't ride the brakes – they will heat up and become ineffective. Overtaking can be tricky on some narrow roads. Consider if overtaking is necessary; if in doubt, don't bother.

3 MAKE SURE THE TOW VEHICLE IS UP TO THE TASK

Ensure your tow vehicle is safely capable of pulling your caravan. Generally, the car needs to be heavier than the van. Because of the nature of the towing physics, a heavy van can push a light vehicle around and make it difficult to control. If in doubt, check with an expert.

The car and van must be in top condition with regular checks on wheel nuts, tyre pressures, brakes, tyres, brake lights, turn signals and wheel bearings. Regular checks each day when travelling are essential. Most caravans will require a set of extended mirrors on the tow vehicle for safety and the law.

4 KNOW YOUR WEIGHTS

There are maximum legal weights for your loaded vehicle and van. You mustn't overload the specified weights on the vehicle plates. The various definitions around weights are set out below, and you need to understand what they mean for your setup. Don't guess what the van and car weigh – check your car and van setup on a weighbridge to ensure you are legal and safe. It doesn't take much of a load for many vehicles to exceed their maximum GVM when hooked up to a caravan. Consider a GVM upgrade from a company like Tough Dog 4WD Suspension as seen in our Operation 200 series online.

5 DISTRIBUTE THE LOAD

A poorly loaded van is one of the most common causes of caravan accidents. Too much weight at either end will unbalance the load. Excess weight at the back is especially dangerous, and even loading a couple of bikes on a rear rack can cause the van to sway at speed. But a heavy load at the front can overload the ball connection. A tow ball scale isn't expensive and will give an accurate idea of how much weight is up front. Heavy items should be in the low centre cupboards over

the axles when loading the van. Aim for a tow ball weight around 10 per cent of your loaded van and a good guide is that the van should sit level on the hitch.

Sometimes a flat tyre, wind or a large truck overtaking can cause sway. If this happens, don't brake heavily. It will only make the situation worse. Take your foot off the accelerator and apply the trailer brake. That's the push button on a REDARC Electronics system and a slide-on older-style controllers. Practice this manoeuvre in a safe place to instinctively activate the control.

6 BE MINDFUL OF YOUR FELLOW ROAD USERS

Keep an eye on following traffic through extending mirrors or a rearview camera. Adopt a defensive driving style that anticipates anyone overtaking and cutting in. A caravan is an invitation for other drivers to throw caution to the wind and get past, so stay alert in heavier traffic to respond to the changing dynamic. Signal your intent to turn with plenty of time and keep a safe distance from traffic ahead so you can stop in an emergency. If travelling with other vans, keep a reasonable distance between your companions so other traffic can overtake.

7 USE A UHF RADIO

Out on the open road a UHF radio is the best communication, especially with heavy vehicles. Trucks operate on channel 40 on most roads and channel 29 on the Pacific Highway between Sydney and Brisbane. A UHF might be the best accessory you can fit if you travel long distances. Don't be afraid to use it to let truck drivers know that you will let them overtake when it's safe. Wait to slow down until the truck has moved into the passing lane. And yes, it's legal to use a radio when driving.

8 SLOW DOWN IN OVERTAKING LANES

Or at least don't accelerate. Even if you are travelling close to the speed limit on relatively busy roads, some traffic will likely build up behind you, even some heavy vehicles. To avoid antagonism, you should help vehicles pass whenever it's safe. On roads with regular passing lanes, the most annoying thing you can do is speed up when the road widens. This is the main complaint we hear from trucking associations. Trucks are speed-limited; if you increase momentum, they can't get past, and frustration builds. Don't be a nuisance. Back off and enjoy the scenery.

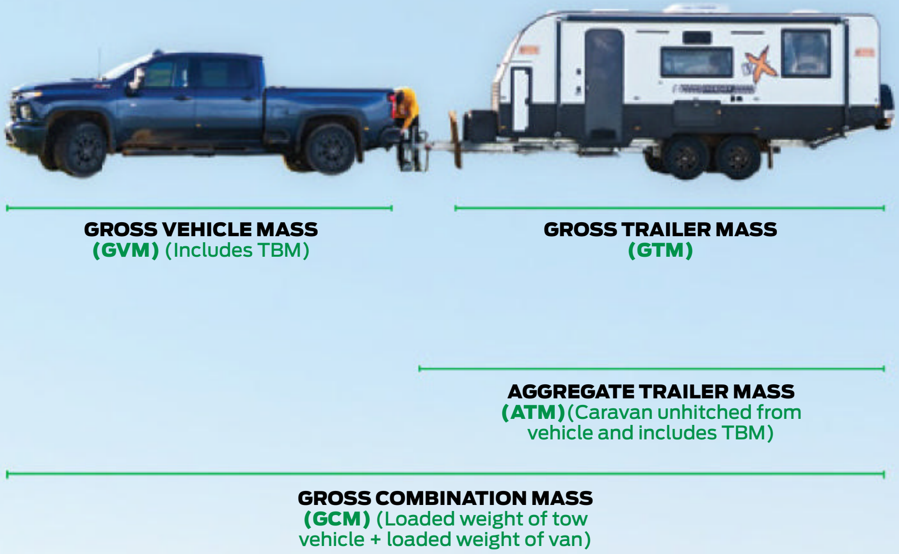
9 TAKE REGULAR BREAKS

Towing is more demanding than driving unhitched. There is more on which to concentrate, and fatigue is the enemy of long-distance travel. Heavy vehicle drivers have strict time limits before they rest, and stopping regularly might be a good pattern to follow. To avoid straying stock and wildlife, getting into camp before dusk is always a good plan.

10 KNOW YOUR CARAVAN HEIGHT

A low-level bridge or tunnel will appear one day in the middle of nowhere. So, Dymo tape the caravan height to the dash so there's no doubt about getting under. You might only use it once, but you don't need an extra skylight.

Safe travels,
John Ford


GROSS VEHICLE MASS (GVM) (Includes TBM)
GROSS TRAILER MASS (GTM)
AGGREGATE TRAILER MASS (ATM)(Caravan unhitched from vehicle and includes TBM)
GROSS COMBINATION MASS (GCM) (Loaded weight of tow vehicle + loaded weight of van)

WEIGHT DEFINITIONS

Tare (van)	The unladen weight of the van with all permanently fitted accessories
Tare (vehicle)	The unladen weight of the tow vehicle with 10L fuel
ATM (van)	Aggregate trailer mass: The maximum legal weight of the van when loaded
GTM	Gross trailer mass: The maximum weight on the tyres when hitched to a tow vehicle. Does not include tow ball weight
GVM	Gross vehicle mass: Maximum legal weight of the tow vehicle with everything loaded including passengers, accessories, fuel and tow ball weight
GCM	Gross combined mass: Maximum legal combined weight of the tow vehicle and van
TBM (TBW)	Tow ball mass or weight: The weight of the van on the tow ball or hitch as specified in the vehicle manual
Payload	The difference between tare weight and ATM or GVM. The maximum weight that can be legally carried

ABOVE AND RIGHT The public Showcase next to Lake Pertobe in Warrnambool, Vic; The Showcase was one of the busiest we've had

COTY 2025: THE GRIT AND THE GLAMOUR

Twelve entrants, one overall winner. Caravan of the Year presented by MSA 4X4 Accessories was back for another round of judging Australia's best and most innovative vans … let's take a peek behind the scenes at this year's event.

***Words** Amelia Mansell **Pics** Ted Airey and Amelia Mansell*

2025 CARAVAN OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY CARAVAN WORLD | MSA

Welcome to Caravan of the Year (COTY) 2025 – and what an event it was. Kicking off in the final days of February, this year's COTY shaped up to be one of our most hotly contested competitions yet, with every entry raising the bar even higher and making the job of choosing a winner more difficult than ever.

Over five action-packed days, we put 12 of the best caravans and hybrids Australia has to offer through their paces – and now, it's time to reveal what our judges had to say and, of course, the results.

But before we do, let's take a look at what went on behind the scenes at COTY 2025 and, for the newcomers, recap what this event is and why we do it.

MSA POWER FOLD TOWING MIRRORS
MSA POWER FOLD TOWING MIRRORS
NOW AVAILABLE
WITH CAMERA PROVISION
FORD RANGER PY
LANDCRUISER 300 SERIES
LANDCRUISER 200 SERIES
NISSAN PATROL Y62
PRADO 250 SERIES
msa 4X4 ACCESSORIES
STORAGE DRAWER SYSTEMS

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE MSA 4X4 Accessories on display at the public Showcase; REDARC Electronics was up front and centre as well; The COTY judges checking out Eden Caravans' entry

A WHIRLWIND WEEK IN WARRNAMBOOL

To set the scene for the stunning content you'll see in these pages and online, this year we headed to the beautiful town of Warrnambool only a short drive from the Great Ocean Road, Vic. We called two of Warrnambool's caravan parks home during our stay – the NRMA Warrnambool Riverside Holiday Park and Discovery Parks - Warrnambool – and while (for the most part) the town put its best and sunniest face forward, by the end of our five-day stay it had well and truly lived up to its 'Windy Warrnambool' moniker.

Each year the standard of entrants at COTY climbs higher, with new innovations, tech, power and luxury features pushing the industry forward. Every van has something unique to offer and a different buyer in mind, whether it's for first-time caravanners, family tourers or experienced offroad enthusiasts looking for a van that can go off-grid indefinitely.

This year's lineup of entrants featured a great mix of styles as well as new names and returning veterans, with 12 vans from 11 manufacturers all vying for the ultimate bragging rights of 'Caravan of the Year' for 2025. One of the standouts from this year's event was that nearly every van entered was accompanied by the owners or family members of the manufacturer – all except Snowy River Caravans (based offshore) which was represented by its dealer principal, and Sunland Caravans, which instead sent the Aussie Destinations Unknown (ADU) team who live and travel with the very Sunland van that was entered into the event.

From those who made the quick trip over from Melbourne to others who came as far as Queensland or made the quick dash over from the Adelaide Caravan Show to ensure they didn't miss out, it was a big effort for all teams involved.

And while the content you see has the high-polish COTY is known for, the event itself is a fast-paced whirlwind of activity from dawn 'til well past dusk, and none of it would be possible without our fantastic team of photographers, videographers, judges and organisers.

Our sponsors are also key in making this event what it is. MSA 4X4 Accessories – one of Australia's leading brands for outdoor adventuring gear and accessories – returned as COTY's major and naming sponsor for a fourth year running.

"It was great to be the major sponsor of the event; it is always a pleasure to work

REDARC
VISION
THE POWER OF
REDARC

> “One of the standouts from this year’s event was that nearly every van entered *was accompanied by the owners or family members of the manufacturer*”

with such a professional and fun team,” said Shane Miles, director of MSA 4X4 Accessories. “Everyone who entered again this year has upped the ante – the quality of fit and finish and the new ideas rolling through from each manufacturer is very exciting to see and all of this transfers to the end user with a better experience.”

REDARC Electronics also returned to COTY for a second year, hosting our wonderful event dinner on the Saturday night where everyone got the chance to relax after the busy public Showcase, chat and enjoy the friendly comradery and good-natured competition this event inspires.

And of course, Ford Australia, which was our event vehicle partner this year and had a great presence at the public Showcase with the F-150 US truck and best-selling Ranger and Everest models on display.

EDEN
X-TREME
ALUMINIUM FRAME
EDEN
EDEN
CARAVANS

CHANGING GEARS FROM THE GRAMPIANS

One of the biggest challenges to overcome this year was shifting the entire event from the Grampians to Warrnambool due to the bushfires that raged through the Grampians region and national park this summer.

It was a hard decision to make, with weeks of time spent scouting locations, driving trails, accommodation and so on, not to mention the hope to support communities suffering from the loss of visitors, all lost. But in the end, the safety of our entrants and team as a whole was the priority, and the event was moved to Warrnambool, only a stone's throw from the Great Ocean Road.

It was no small feat moving an event with approximately 60 people involved, all of whom needed to be housed and fed, only weeks prior to the event, but where there's a will there's a way and Warrnambool proved to be a beautiful, if unforgiving in its changeable weather, backdrop to this year's competition.

WHAT IS COTY AND WHY DO WE DO IT?

Caravan of the Year is the biggest event on our calendar, and its most important function is that it provides experienced and objective reviews of the caravans entered into the competition to help buyers find the best product to suit their requirements. It's a task that's easier said than done, and we must give credit to the team of judges, photographers and videographers who put the content together and, of course, the manufacturers who put their vans forward for testing, knowing not everyone can be a winner.

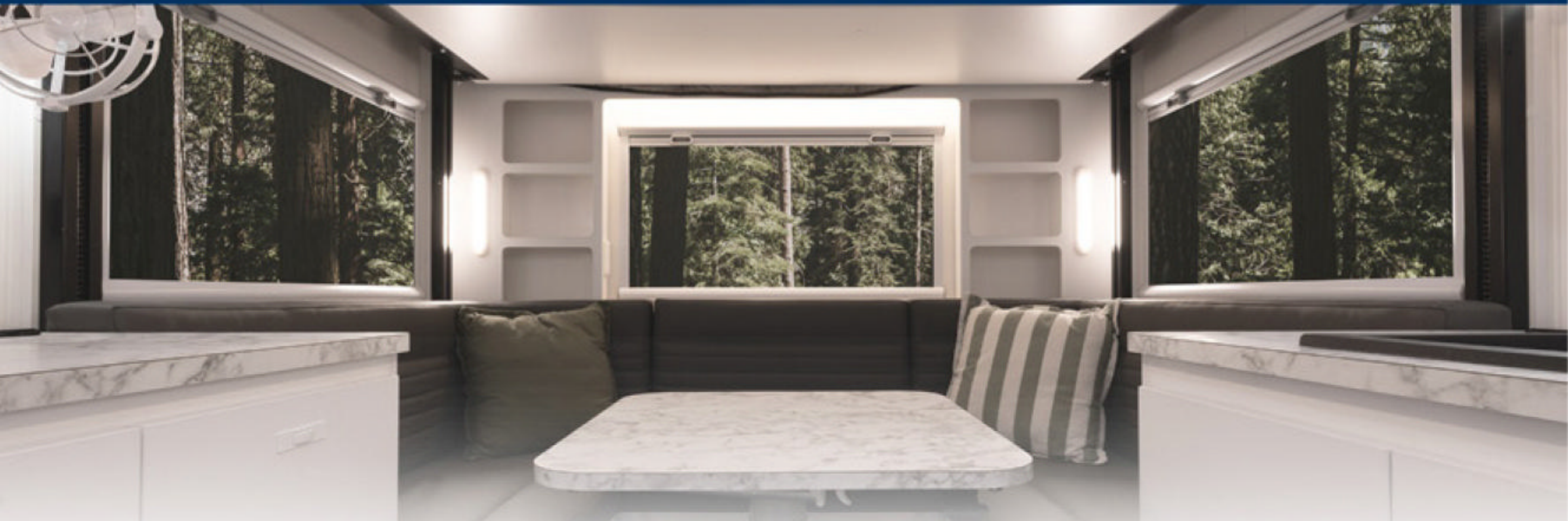
Over a handful of busy days, the entries are thoroughly put to the test, with the panel of judges looking over every inch of the van or hybrid, discussing the ins and outs with the experts who designed them and taking each unit out for a test drive across varied terrain to see how they perform. All the while our team of photographers and videographers capture the fantastic content you'll see in print and on our YouTube channel (scan the QR codes on each review).

KOKODA
COUNTERSTRIKE
VINCERE

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Getting up close and personal with the Kokoda Caravans van; Prime Edge photography session; Getting the Royal Flair van ready for its detail photography

> *"The entries are thoroughly put to the test, with the panel of judges* looking over every inch of the van or hybrid"

EST. ROYAL FLAIR 1975
CARAVANS



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Since 1975, Royal Flair Caravans has been leading the way in quality, innovation, and craftsmanship. Now, we're proud to celebrate half a century of supplying Australians with nothing but the finest caravans for every adventure. Join the Royal Flair family today and experience the legacy of excellence that has made us a trusted name across Australia!

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> "Our judges take each van's intended to use into account, comparing it against similar COTY entries *and other models of a comparable class available on the Australian market*"

ABOVE (Left to right) Malcolm Street, Allison Watt, John Ford and Tim van Duyl

MEET THE JUDGES AND OFFICIAL COTY HOST

This year we welcomed back three of our trusty judges: John Ford, Malcolm Street and Allison Watt. All three are familiar names in this magazine and COTY judging veterans and, as always, it was great to see them in their element looking over each entrant thoroughly and considering the mountain of minute details that make each one unique.

"This year we saw some of the best vans yet at our event, making it difficult to choose a winner," John said. "Entrants had gone the extra mile in presenting their vans in the best light. Attention to detail across the board was pleasingly high. The hours were long, and the pace was fast, but I heard nothing but praise for the photographers and video team who worked from dawn until past dusk."

Allison was likewise impressed by the stunning presentation of the vans for the competition, and when asked what surprised her at this year's event she said: "I was blown away by the number of big US trucks that came along as tow vehicles – they definitely outnumbered the regular 4x4 utes that we are accustomed to seeing. I guess that is mainly because some of the vans are getting bigger and heavier – there seems to be a trend in that direction – although we did see a few light and nimble hybrids and some more 'conventional' caravans."

Malcolm also noted the weight of the vans and the flow through to big utes to pull them, and this event was the first time in his caravan towing life that he was required to use his LR truck license. Other highlights for Malcolm included only one contender arriving with a timber framed structure, while all the rest were aluminium or fully composite and several of the vans had layouts that were a bit different than the stock-standard van setup. "The standard of all COTY contenders was very high," Malcolm said. "It's becoming more difficult to judge the winner, not only overall but in the various categories as well. Although customer care and warranty matters are still an area where the caravan industry could do better."

While Tim van Duyl may not have joined the trio of judges this year, he was still along for the ride, this time with the fancy title of 'COTY Host', keeping all the photographers, videographers and entrants on a tight schedule to ensure the content created is up to the high standard that COTY is renowned for. And as the face of the event, he introduces every van and hybrid in the video reviews and interviewed the judges panel to dig deep into their thoughts on the 12 impressive entrants.

"Working as COTY Host was a different role to the judging I've done over the last six years, this year was frantic, but I knew John, Mal and Allison had the important part under control," Tim commented.

"This year's entrants keep on stepping it up and not just with the latest and greatest gadgets but in quality of build and in affordability. Yes, we saw some record high-prices but we also saw vans with low-budgets in mind. Conferring with the judges after the event, like last year, all of us had a personal favourite and it wasn't always what was scored the highest.

"Looking ahead to 2026, I would love us to get to the Grampians. It was heartbreaking to make the call to move but the persistent bush fires posed a real risk we couldn't ignore.

"What I loved about Warrnambool, aside from the all-round excellent hospitality from everyone, was the inquisitive and good nature of the public. Rolling into town with close to $2m in vans and crew vehicles drew a lot of attention, but in the right way. Everyone was up for a chat and everyone was impressed. And if you think Warrnambool looks good in our photos and videos, trust us, it's better in person and during the off season there is so much space and park availability to really enjoy it."

HOW ARE THE ENTRANTS JUDGED?

With caravans becoming increasingly more complicated, this year we expanded our judging framework from nine categories to 10, introducing a new 'Ease of use' criteria to the mix.

Each van is assessed across the 10 key areas in the table, selected to cover all the practical ways a caravan can be evaluated. Since every van and hybrid is unique and built with a different traveller in mind, they cannot always be judged by the same standards. So, our judges take each van's intended to use into account, comparing it against similar COTY entries and other models of a comparable class available on the Australian market.

THE PUBLIC SHOWCASE

The public Showcase day is always one of the standouts of COTY each year. It's a great day where locals and visitors alike can get up close and personal with the latest vans on the market and to speak with the expert teams – many of whom were the owners of the vans this year.

We held this year's Showcase next to the beautiful Lake Pertobe in Warrnambool, and while the event didn't officially kick off until 10am we had plenty of intrigued locals wandering in early after their Park Run or coffee jaunt to check out the vans that were getting decked out for the busy day.

The Showcase Day is a fun day for the entire COTY team as well. It acts like a mini caravan show, providing potential buyers with a focus group of the latest and most innovative models on the market, and we had locals and visitors from neighbouring towns all keen to check out the units.

With a few Showcases under my belt now, one of the main take-aways I've gotten from visitors is that events like this can be much less intimidating than large shows. Rather than having hundreds of models on display, narrowing the field down to a smaller group of high-quality and often quite different styles of models can be easier to consume, and having one-on-one time with the owners or experts who created them helps a lot as well.

The caravans and hybrids weren't the only ones on display. Our event sponsors, MSA 4X4 Accessories, REDARC Electronics and our vehicle sponsor Ford Australia, were all in pride of place and never seemed to have a quiet moment.

It was one of the busiest Showcases we've had, and if the entrants thought they were in for a cruisy day to relax after their busy days of judging, photography and videography, they were wrong. The public never seemed to take a break for lunch, and the entrants were hard-pressed to finish their own. And there were plenty of interested buyers and even some purchases made on the day.

BUILD QUALITY	The overall construction of the van — from the chassis and body to the interior finishes. Judges look for standout craftsmanship as well as any potential red flags.
LIVEABILITY	How practical the van is for its intended everyday use, including the layout, how much storage it offers and what appliances come standard.
EASE OF USE	Assesses how straightforward it is to set up and operate the van or hybrid, taking into account the logic of the layout for everyday use, components and accessories, and whether they enhance convenience or create unnecessary complexity.
INNOVATION	Any fresh ideas or creative thinking in the van's design — such as a new construction technique, clever layout or a unique design feature. It's a broad area that covers everything from smart solutions to common problems and improved efficiency to bold design choices that push industry boundaries.
VALUE FOR MONEY	The judges consider the overall price of the van or hybrid in relation to what it delivers in terms of features, build quality, durability and overall user experience compared to similar entrants at COTY and on the market.
SELF-SUFFICIENCY	How self-sufficient the unit is for its intended use, factoring in water storage, power systems, solar, gas capacity plus ensuite and cooking facilities.
TOWABILITY	How the van or hybrid handles across different terrains during the tow test, considering its weight and feel when driving and what type of tow vehicle is required.
SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING	The judges consider the unit's intended target market and how it meets the needs of those prospective buyers. For example, if it's marketed as an off-grid or offroad model, does it have the build quality and power, water and solar capacity to back that up and deliver on expectations?
CUSTOMER CARE	Assesses the warranty and after-sale care provided by the manufacturer and how these compare to industry standards.
X-FACTOR	Highlights what sets the van or hybrid apart from its competitors — those standout features that leave a lasting impression on potential buyers. This could be anything from innovative design elements, both inside and out, to unique accessories or features, and how effectively these are implemented into the overall package.

BELOW There was no slow point at the 2025 COTY Showcase

But, like good party guests, the public abided by the closing time and our entire team was able to make the slow but steady exit to prepare for the event dinner at Dart & Marlin, sponsored by REDARC Electronics. With outdoor drinks and a cosy sit-down dinner, it was a great night for the entire COTY team to unwind, celebrate the successful day and competition.

THE BEST OF COTY 2025

The caravanning and RV industry is only getting more advanced as each year passes, and our COTY entrants are evidence of that. Every year we see new and exciting features and construction methods that push the industry further, and we're keen to finally show off the fantastic contenders for 2025.

This year was a particularly good one, with a great group of entrants who all joined in the good-natured spirit of the event, enjoying the chance to discuss the industry and their shared love of exploring Australia with their vans over dinner each night or in between rounds of photography, driving or judging. There was a great sense of camaraderie, with the less experienced getting tips from old hands to ensure everyone had a great time.

The competition was stiff, with returning veterans hoping for another chance at the big gong and newcomers who came for good content but left with a glint of competition in their eye, so a big round of applause to the judges who had the hardest task of all. But that's what COTY is all about – so let's dive into the first six reviews.

> *"The caravanning and RV industry is only getting more advanced as each year passes, and our COTY entrants are evidence of that"*

ABOVE AND BELOW Detail photography of the Snowy River Caravans van; Spinifex Caravans judging session

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2025

CARAVAN OF THE YEAR

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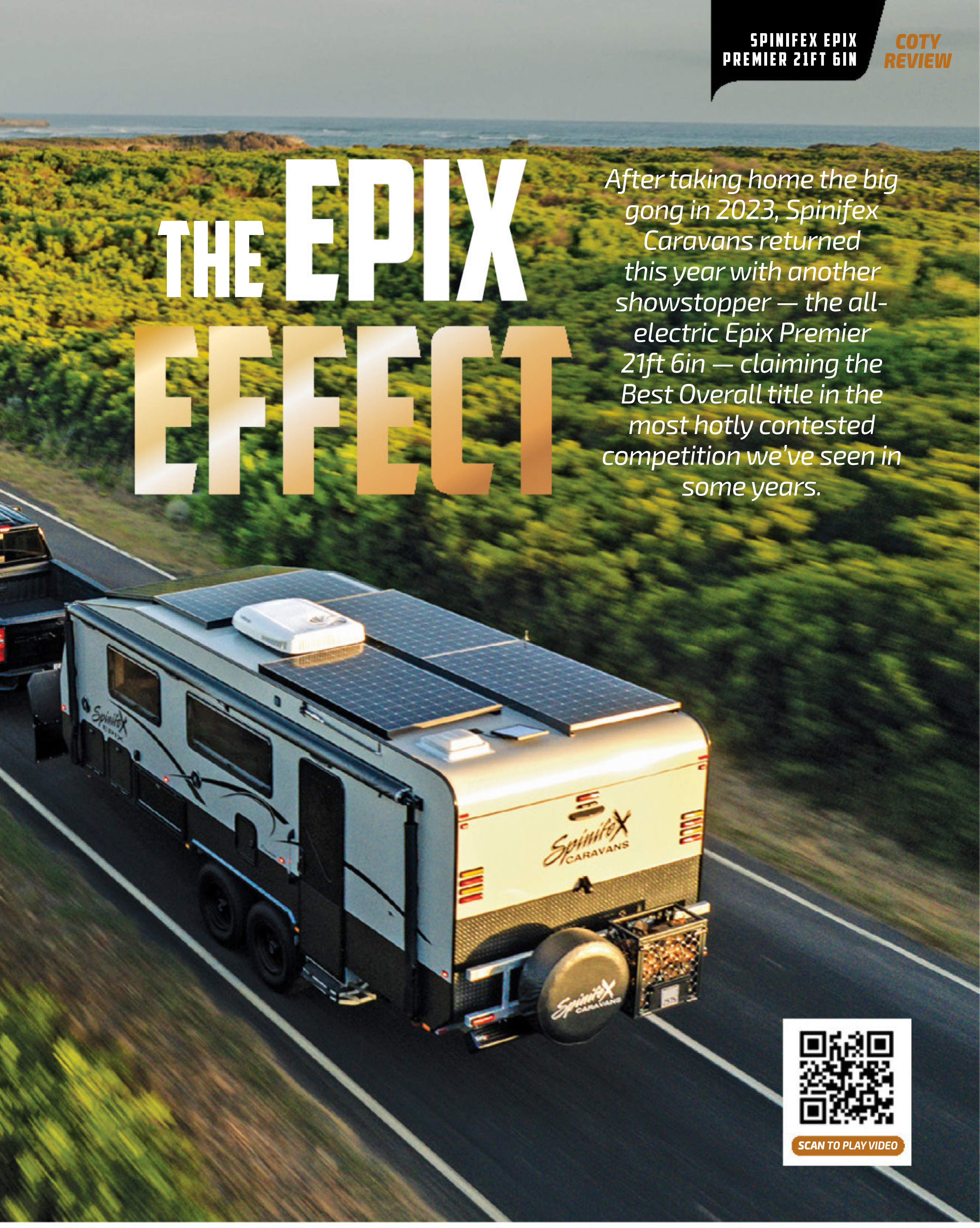
Winner BEST OVERALL

★ ★ ★

Words *COTY judges*
Pics and video *Josh Hanger,*
Josh Robinson, Ted Airey, Graham Neander

Spinifex has done it again. After winning Caravan of the Year in 2023, owners Steve and Elise Thompson brought their new Epix Premier 21ft 6in all-electric van down from Queensland for this year's Caravan of the Year (COTY) and impressed the judges with its quality build, functionality and stunning interior to win the title of Caravan of the Year yet again.



THE EPIX EFFECT

After taking home the big gong in 2023, Spinifex Caravans returned this year with another showstopper — the all-electric Epix Premier 21ft 6in — claiming the Best Overall title in the most hotly contested competition we've seen in some years.

SCAN TO PLAY VIDEO

SPINIFEX EPIX PREMIER 21FT 6IN

MALCOLM STREET
▸ **FIELD EDITOR**

BUILD QUALITY

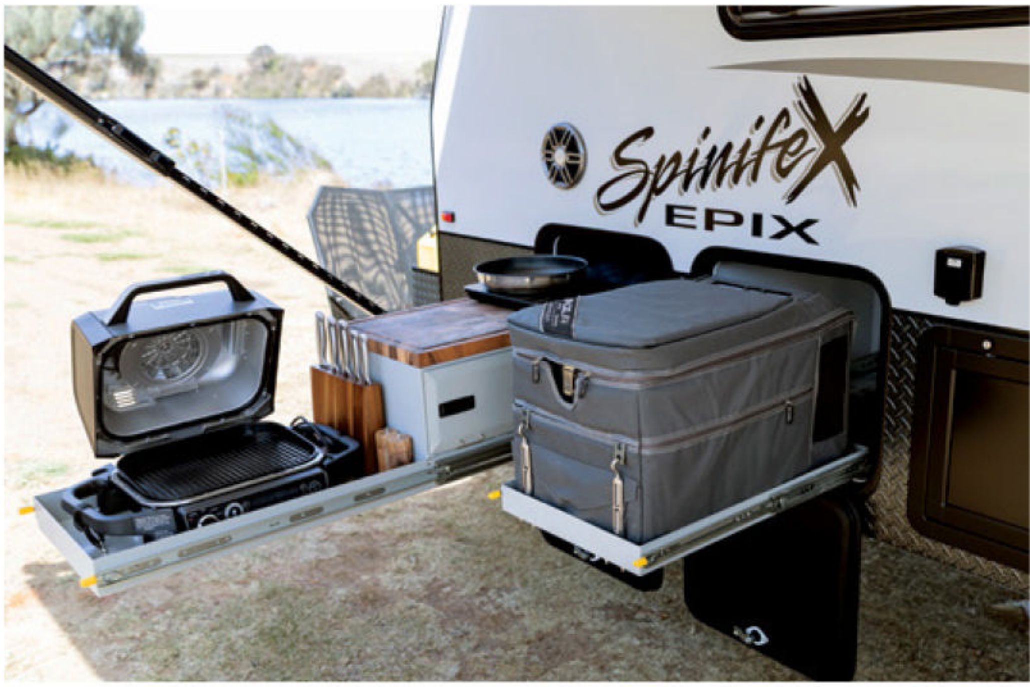
Spinifex is a boutique caravan manufacturer with a well-established reputation for building fine products. That was certainly the case with the Epix Premier 21ft 6in van, Spinfex's COTY 2025 contender. Like a few other entrants, it was built for company owner Steve Thompson and his wife Elise. Apart from anything else, it included a few features that would help Steve indulge in his passion for fishing during the couple's travels.

Starting on the inside, the fit and finish is very much what we have come to expect from Spinifex. All the cabinetry is constructed using pine timber for the framework and lightweight ply timber for all the fascia work. Marine standard catches are used on all the drawers and hidden catches on the overhead lockers. All of which operate smoothly as required. The internal colour scheme was pleasing to the eye and looked like it had a bit of female influence – not something every caravan manufacturer can claim. A couple of features were a bit special (read expensive) on this van. One was the very soft Scottish leather (Elise's choice) used for the upholstery, and the other two were related to the taps. They had a gunmetal finish and were sensor operated – convenient and no water wastage.

Spinifex uses an interlocking aluminium C-section frame for the bodywork. The fibreglass composite walls and roof are all one-piece items and full insulation is used throughout, including the 20mm composite floor. Aluminium propeller plate finished in Aztec Silver is a very decorative and practical touch. Underneath the van body, the BlueScope steel chassis has triple longitudinal RHS beams with a 100mm x 50mm (4in x 2in) upper beam and two 75mm x 50mm (3in x 2in) lower beams. The height of the rails means a flat floor van inside. The chassis area is a good clue as to what the rest of the van looks like, and everything was neat, tidy and well protected.

ABOVE AND BELOW The Epix Premier was built for remote off-grid travel; External storage cupboard on the offside

2025
CARAVAN OF THE YEAR
SPONSORED BY
Winner
BEST OVERALL



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Towed with a Silverado Chev 2500HD; Airbag hitch; External slide-out kitchen with Ninja grill/air fryer; Cruisemaster 4500kg ATX suspension

BUILD QUALITY ★

> “The chassis area is a good clue as to what the rest of the van looks like, *and everything was neat, tidy and well protected*”

SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING

Being built for the company owner means the van has been set up in a few purposeful ways, but overall, in its basic form, it’s a van built for offroad travel to remote parts of Australia, in particular, some great fishing spots. Inside the layout is the very familiar front bed/rear bathroom arrangement and having an external body length of 6.68m (21ft 9in) means plenty of room to move around. The kitchen has a very clean look with plenty of vegetable cutting space, as well as room for the induction hob. There’s no shortage of drawers, and the overhead lockers are quite deep in the air space above, offering a very generous storage.

Included in the van’s optioned-on fittings is an external kitchen with a Ninja Woodfire Outdoor Oven that can be used as a barbecue, smoker, griller or air fryer. It keeps all those cooking smells outside. In addition, there’s a chest fridge/freezer on a slide-out in an adjacent bin, thus minimising trips in and out of the van at cooking time.

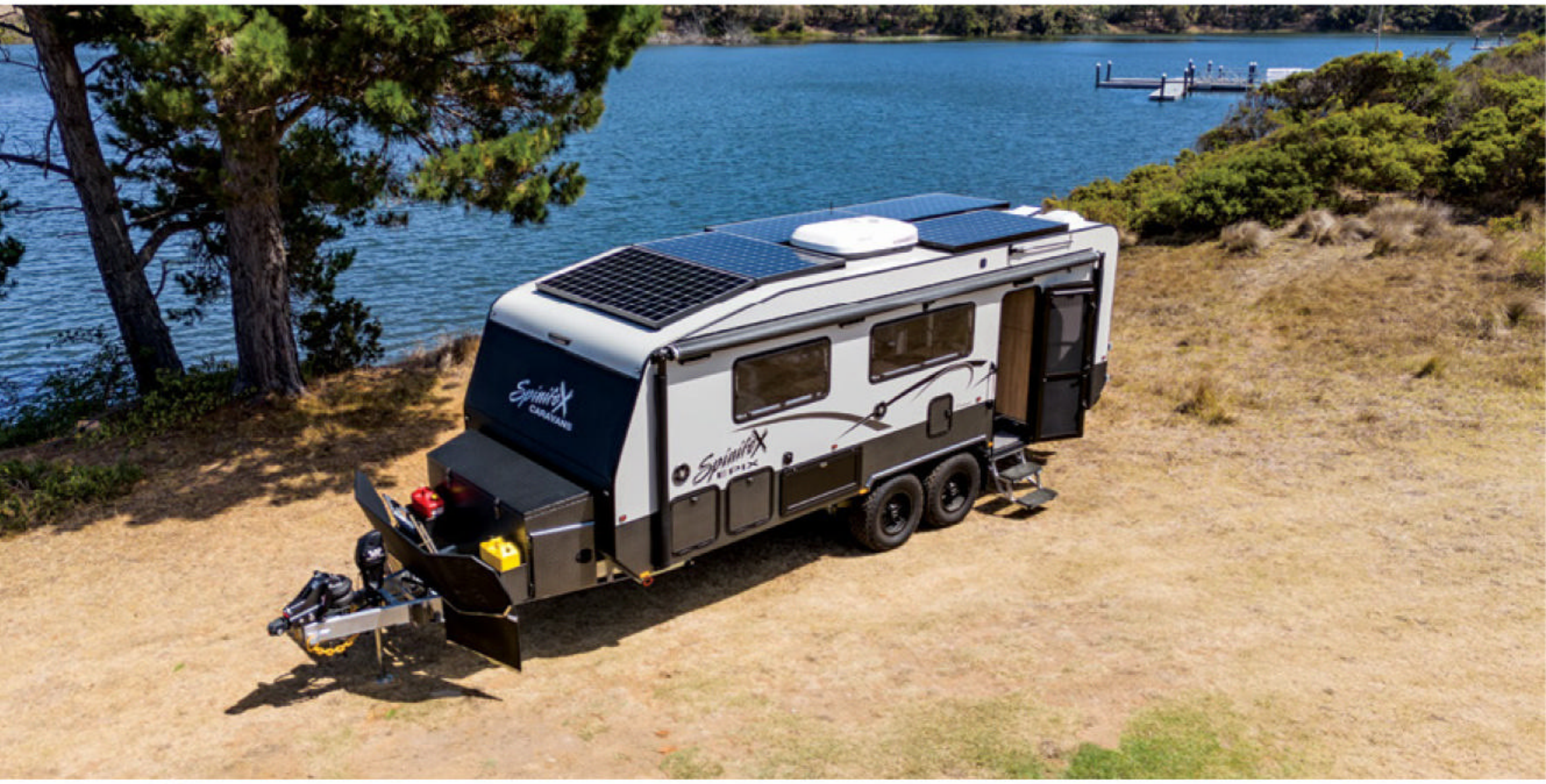
A useful feature built into the offside wall is a shallow compartment designed to hold hoses, power leads, a cordless drill and wheel ramps. External storage includes everything from the storage box and jerry can holders on the drawbar to the rear bumper with a wood storage box. That really captures the outdoor lifestyle nature of this van – with a few home comforts, of course.

TOWABILITY

For towing this van, we used a Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD. Rated for a 4500kg towing capacity, it made for a very easy cruising style of driving. I really like the power and torque of the 6.6L turbo diesel, which handled the van effortlessly. The van is fitted with Cruisemaster 4500kg ATX suspension with Firestone Airide airbags and Cruisemaster’s new Body Control System (BCS).

LIVEABILITY ★

> *“Elise brought the finishing touches of colour and surface choices to the build, resulting in an utterly gobsmacking and inviting interior* that impressed the judges”



JOHN FORD
▸ **EDITOR**

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The van prioritises getting into remote locations and comes well-equipped for extended time off the grid. The generous 1120kg payload allows for filling the five 80L water tanks – an extra 400kg – without overloading, and that can be an issue in some vans when packed with all the gear we take on extended journeys. All tanks are individually plumbed, so you won't lose all your water if there's a leak. There's also an 80L grey water tank that opens up more camping options.

An Innovation RV composting toilet has individual collection bags so that it will run almost indefinitely.

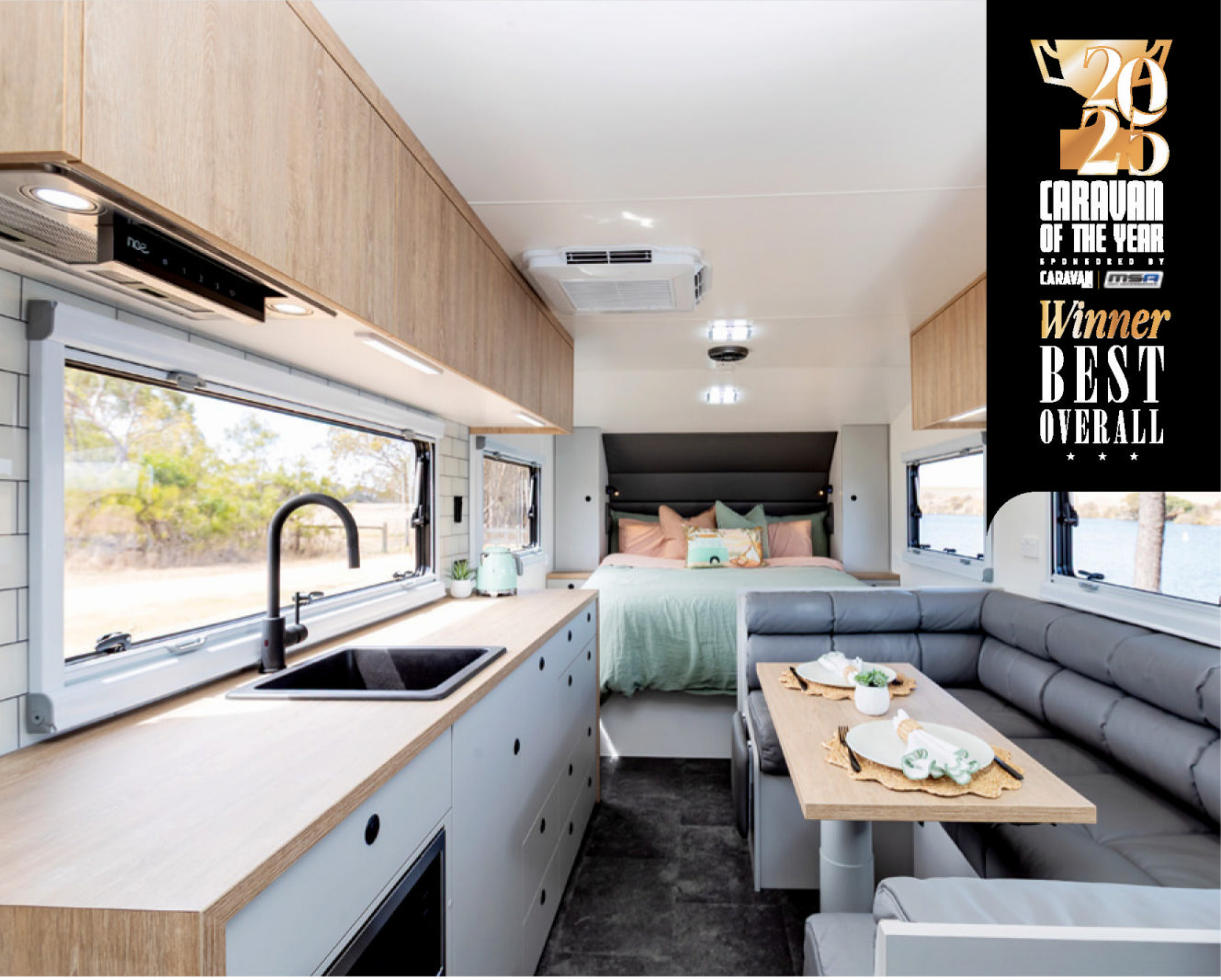
Spinifex has been a leader in applying solar technology to caravanning, and this latest system lets owners camp off the grid and use all their appliances for as long as they want. Up top are five 78V/415W solar panels charging the four 51V 100Ah lithium ZRPG 100 per cent discharge batteries with the equivalent of 1600Ah at 12V. An 8000W Victron inverter means you can run the air-conditioner and your 240V electrical appliances at the same time.

ABOVE AND BELOW Five 415W solar panels; Innovation RV composting toilet

The 32L external fridge/freezer and the 274L unit in the kitchen area take care of refrigeration. A diesel heater is on hand for cold nights, and there's an onboard petrol generator for backup power and charging when off-grid.

LIVEABILITY

We have mentioned that Spinifex owners Elise and Steve built this van for themselves. With their extensive caravanning experience, they know what works for long trips away from home and how to make life on the road as pleasant as possible. Elise, in particular, brought the finishing



touches of colour and surface choices to the build, resulting in an utterly gobsmacking and inviting interior that impressed the judges. Although most buyers will forego options like the Scottish leather lounge, padded leather features and brushed copper sinks, these choices added to the top shelf impression.

The size, layout and seamless indoor-outdoor living areas created an almost perfect luxury retreat for couples. Outside, there are ample and versatile storage options for all the gear you might need, and we appreciated the external kitchen's ergonomic design and quick setup, along with the electric combination smoker and grill.

The interior has the classic couples layout of a rear door with electric steps leading to the ensuite on the right. The living space is well-lit and airy, boasting a luxury club lounge and a movable table, while the bed at the front offers the privacy that most owners like to see.

The neat design of the kitchen bench offers impressive preparation space, and two convenient rubbish bins add a nice touch. The touch-sensor kitchen tap was a fantastic feature for washing dirty hands without leaving marks on the tap.

The ensuite is roomy and airy, with a full-length mirror, elegant vanity and a large shower. The wall-mount washing machine is necessary when fishing is a priority, and the laundry chute will keep things tidy.

Cruisemaster's self-levelling airbag system and electric jockey wheel make setting up the van for camping quick and trouble-free – no more setting ramps and backing up to ensure a good night's sleep.

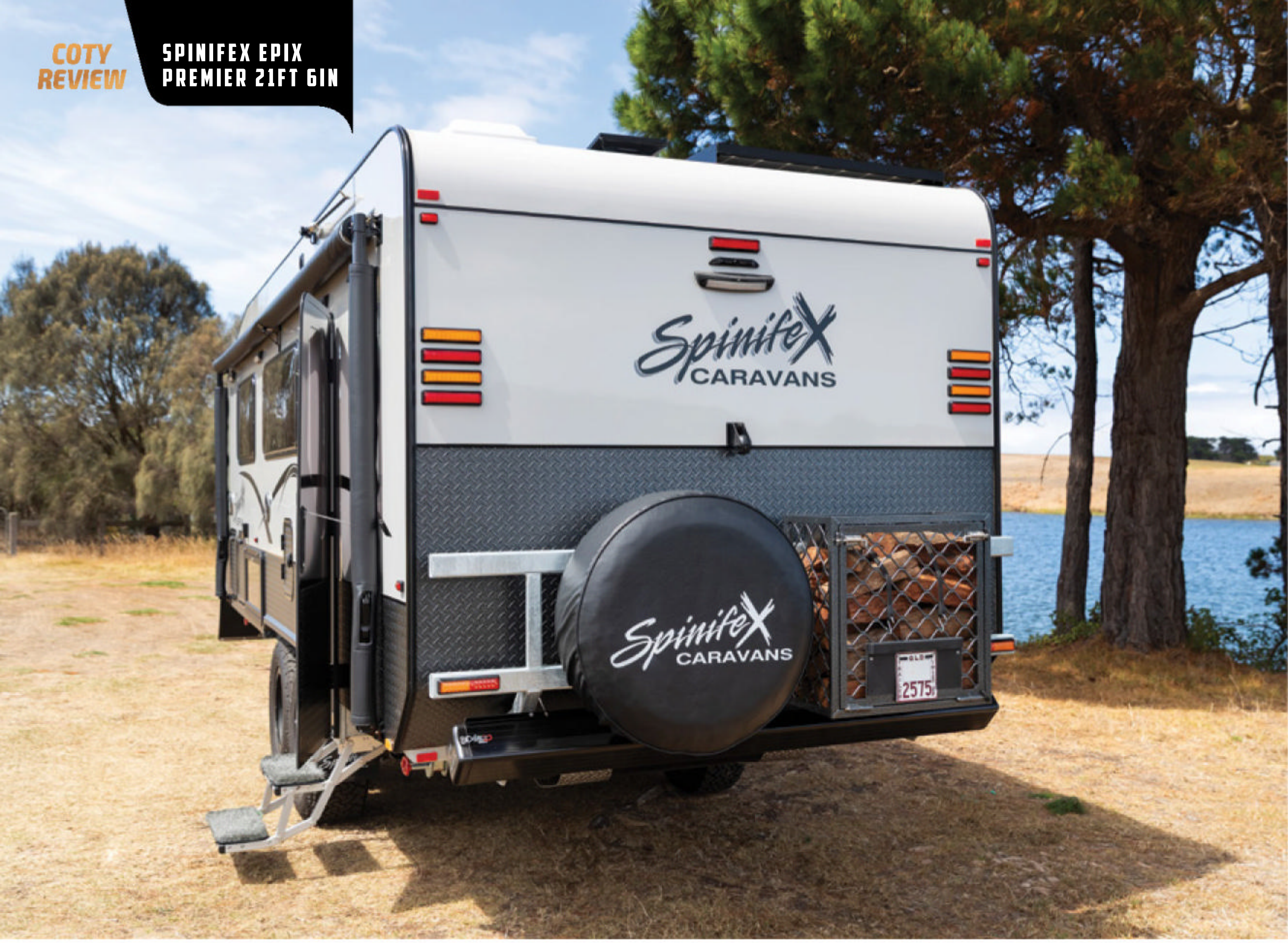
Power and 12V points are plentiful, including at the large comfortable bed with phone pouches for changing.

VALUE FOR MONEY

When we talk about value, it can be difficult to be objective with such a high-end van. We have to consider price and compare it to what else is in the market with these levels of offroad competence, self-sufficiency, and amenity.

ABOVE AND BELOW Gobsmacking interior; The Scottish leather club lounge adds the lux factor

The stock price without the leather, taps and custom chopping board is $235k, so it's not for your average first van buyer. Is it a good value? Well, it's probably one of the best-looking and best-finished vans anywhere, so what price is that sort of exclusivity? Against its peers, it is excellent value, especially considering the high-end power system.



INNOVATION ★

"The rear bar is part of the chassis, not bolted on ... *one of Steve's inclusions here was a special compartment for his fishing rod collection*"

ALLISON WATT
DEPUTY EDITOR

ABOVE AND BELOW Clever storage on the rear of the van; Victron electrics

EASE OF USE

Steve and Elise did a couple of big trips in their last van – the Electrex Premier which won COTY in 2023 – and made some changes when designing and building the Epix Premier. Among the most noticeable is its size at 21ft 6in compared to the previous 19ft 6in.

The Epix has enough solar and battery power to allow them to camp off-grid indefinitely and when they pull up to camp all levelling is done at the push of a button thanks to the airbag suspension setup.

Most of their cooking will be done outside on the slide-out kitchen using the Ninja oven and the portable induction hotplates. The external kitchen has a drawer, a massive wooden chopping board and a place for a knife block. Inside there's the option of a convection microwave should they need it.

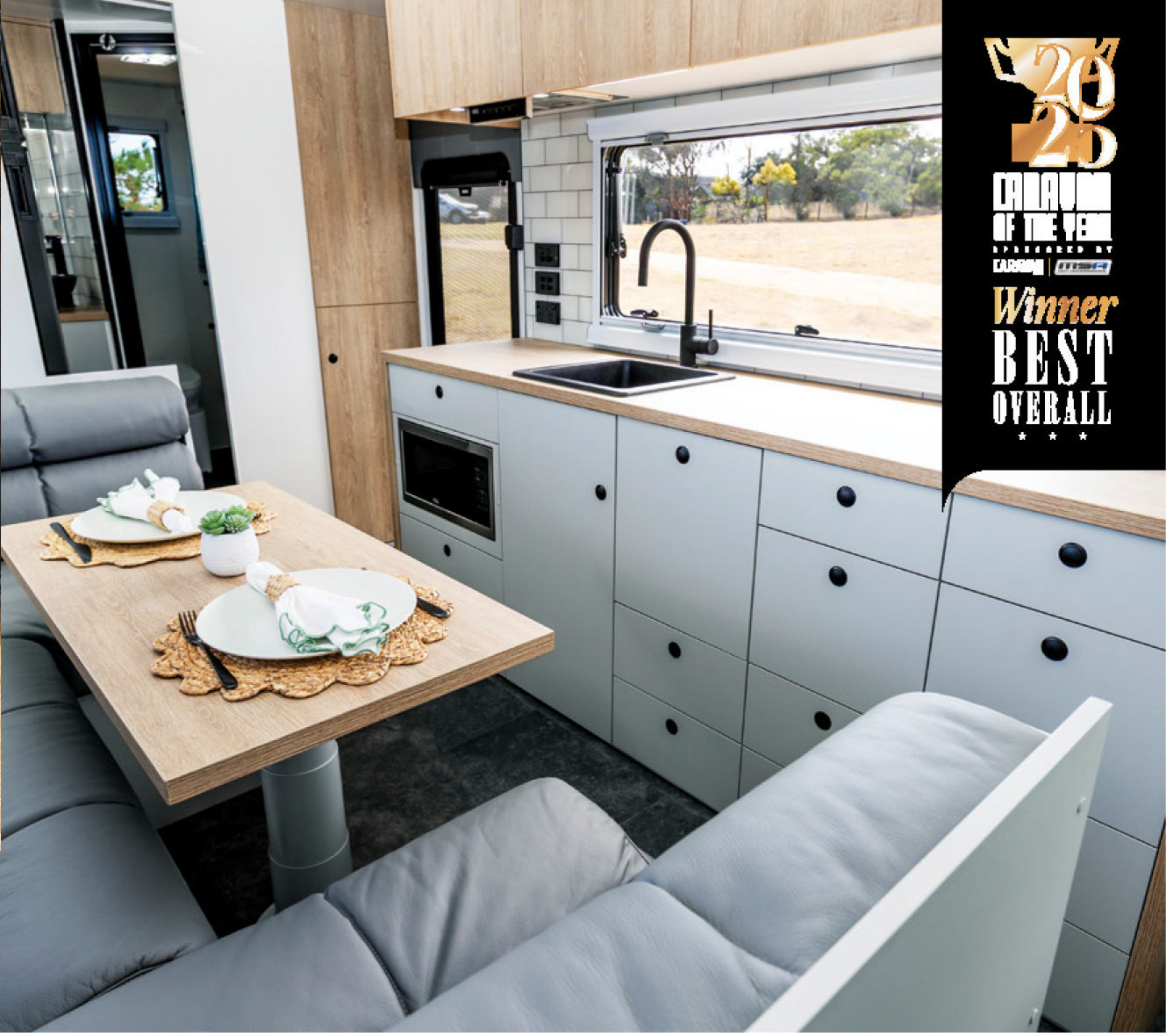
There's nothing Steve and Elise haven't thought of to suit their camping lifestyle including an external shower, external 32L Engel fridge/freezer, Starlink Mini connected permanently to the roof, dimmable white and yellow lights, Webasto hydronic hot water, diesel heating and air-conditioning.

INNOVATION

Innovation doesn't have to mean complicated and some of the innovations built into the Epix are quite simple.

For example, padded vinyl covers around the awning arms not only protects the arms from stone chips and the like while travelling, but – when extended – will protect your head every time you bump into it. Haven't we all done that hundreds of times?

There is an external hatch from which to empty the composting toilet, which is a



ABOVE AND BELOW A hidden rangehood above the motion sensor tap; Pantry inside the rear entry door

nice touch and means no more walking the separate waste containers through the van to empty them.

In the kitchen, the rangehood is hidden and the main tap has an infrared sensor so that you never have to touch it with sticky hands. Marine catches are featured on all the internal overhead cupboards and, as with their previous van, Steve and Elise eliminated overhead cupboards over the bed to add to the feeling of spaciousness.

Outside there is an Oz Glide airbag hitch designed for US trucks coupled with a Cruisemaster DO45 hitch, and the separate fittings for each water tank was a nice touch.

And the rear bar is part of the chassis, not bolted on. One of Steve's inclusions here was a special compartment for his fishing rod collection.

CUSTOMER CARE

Spinifex offers a three-year manufacturers warranty and there's five years on the Victron electronics.

Spinifex general manager Scott Knipe is the first point of contact in the event that something goes wrong will point customers in the direction of a repairer Australia wide. Spinifex offers a 24/7 support subscription service for the electrical system which is provided by IRV and costs $365 a year.

Many Spinifex customers are repeat buyers and for newcomers there is a comprehensive full-day handover and the opportunity to do an overnight shakedown at a farm stay just down the road from the Queensland factory, should they have any questions or issues while becoming familiar with their new vans.

SPINIFEX EPIX PREMIER 21FT 6IN

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES
Overall length 9.33m (30ft 6in)
Body length 6.68m (21ft 9in)
Width 2.38m (7ft 8in)
Height 3.2m (10ft 5in)
Tare 3380kg
ATM 4500kg
Payload 1120kg (calculated)
Ball weight at tare 240kg
Ball to tare ratio 7.1% (calculated)

EXTERNAL
Frame Aluminium C-section
Cladding Foam core one-piece fibreglass rear and side walls, one-piece fibreglass composite roof/front panel
Chassis BlueScope steel, triple longitudinal beam chassis, fully welded one-piece construction
Suspension Cruisemaster ATX 4.5T with Firestone Airide airbags
Coupling OZ Glide hitch dampening system with Rebound dampeners, adjustable compression airbags coupled with Cruisemaster DO45 hitch
Brakes Cruisemaster hydraulic 12in ventilated disc brakes
Wheels ROH Hammer 17x9 with Venom Terra Hunter XT 285/70 R17 tyres
Water 5 x 80L freshwater, 1 x 80L grey water
Battery 4 x 51V ZRGP 100Ah lithium (1600Ah at 12V)
Inverter 8000W / 110A 48V Victron inverter/charger with 1000W DC/DC charger
Solar 5 x 415W
Air-conditioner Webasto Cool Top Trail 34
Gas N/A
Sway control N/A
Cooking External slide-out kitchen with Ninja Woodfire Outdoor Oven
Fridge 32L Engel chest fridge/freezer

INTERNAL
Cooking Two portable single induction cooktops for internal/external cooking
Microwave NCE 23L flatbed
Fridge Thetford 274L compressor
Bathroom Innovation RV iRV Revolution composting toilet, basin and separate shower
Washing machine NCE wall-mounted 3kg
Hot water Webasto HWS and diesel heater

PRICE FROM $235,000

OPTIONS FITTED
- Suspension upgraded to include Cruisemaster ATX Unleashed M60 shock absorber kit
- Double rear bar
- Starlink Mini roof mounted
- Ninja Woodfire Outdoor Oven
- Portable 32L Engel fridge/freezer on slide-out tray
- Fusion XS 6.5in 200W Sports Marine Speakers, internal and external
- Mirror shower door
- Oval matte black basins, matte black mixer tapware and sensor tap with gunmetal finish in kitchen
- Subway tile acrylic splashback
- Scottish leather upholstery upgrade

PRICE AS SHOWN $247,950

MORE INFORMATION
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Deception Bay Qld 4508
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E: sales@spinifexcaravans.com.au
W: spinifexcaravans.com.au

2025
CARAVAN OF THE YEAR
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CARAVAN | MSA
Winner
BEST OVERALL

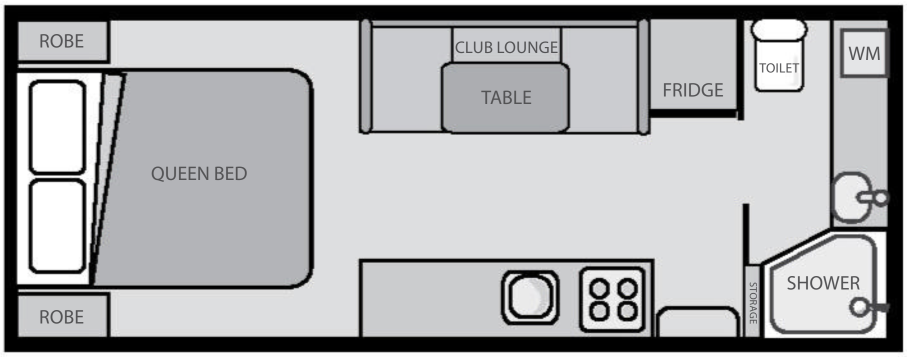
ABOVE Spinifex returned to COTY with another fantastic van that wowed the judges and took home the Best Overall award

X-FACTOR

Elise really knows how to decorate the interior of a caravan and the Epix is just stunning inside. It's classy, tasteful and really beautiful – I could sit in it all day.

From the previously mentioned Scottish highland calf pale grey leather club lounge, a combination of pale grey and oak cabinetry, white walls and ceiling, concrete-look floor coverings and the acrylic subway tile splashbacks and black sinks and tapware in the kitchen and bathroom, the Epix Premier 21ft 6in oozes style – more akin to a designer home than a caravan.

Combined with its quality build, self-sufficiency and the little innovations which will make life on the road easier for Steve and Elise, this Epix Premier 21ft 6in is a worthy winner of Caravan of the Year 2025. Congratulations to them both.



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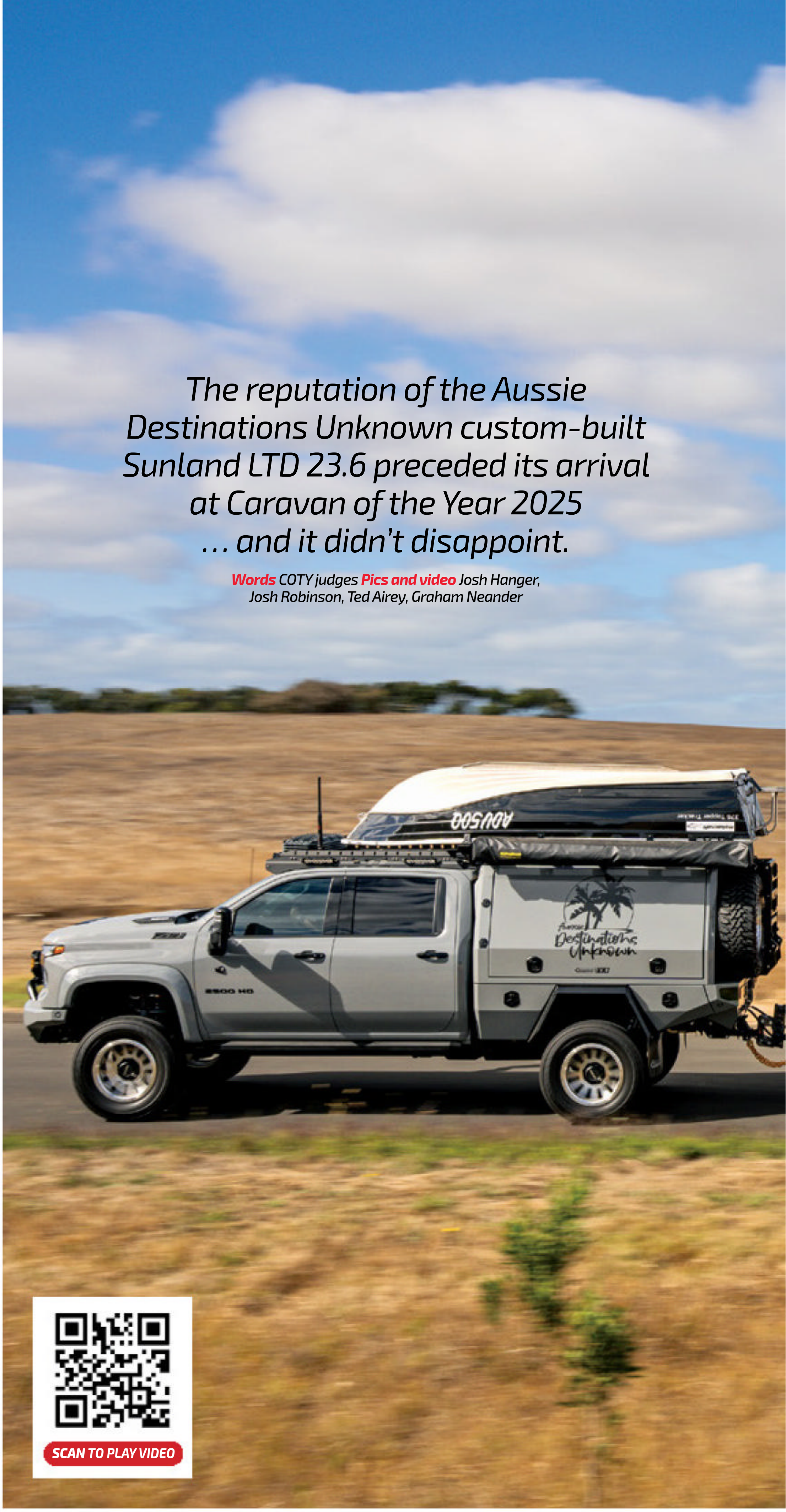
Winner
BEST BUILD QUALITY
★ ★ ★



The reputation of the Aussie Destinations Unknown custom-built Sunland LTD 23.6 preceded its arrival at Caravan of the Year 2025 … and it didn't disappoint.

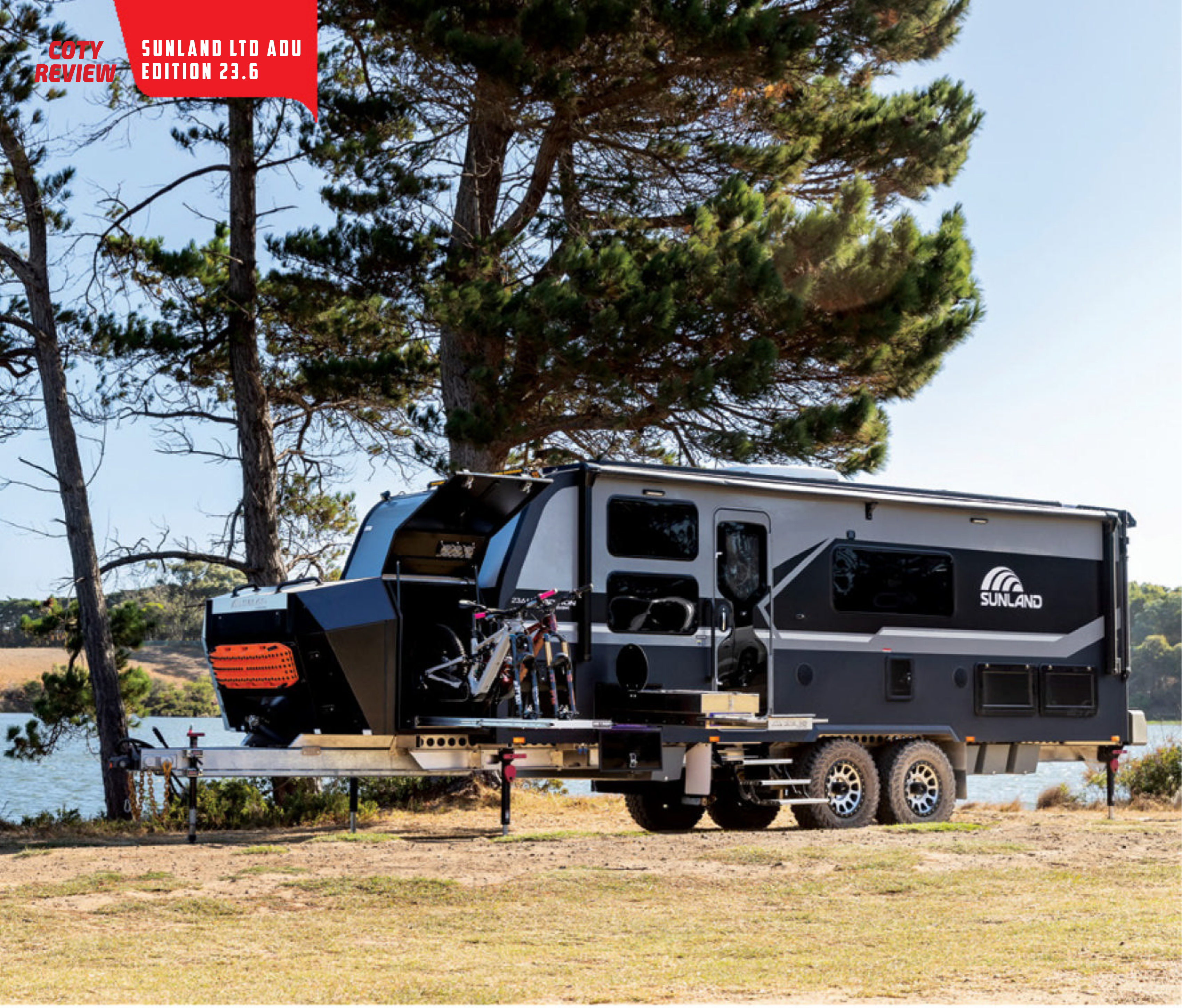
Words COTY judges **Pics and video** Josh Hanger, Josh Robinson, Ted Airey, Graham Neander

SCAN TO PLAY VIDEO

Sunland Caravans returned to Caravan of the Year with a van designed by the online influencers Aussie Destinations Unknown (ADU), Chris and Miriam. The new van is an ADU limited-edition special with a new layout and new construction methods. And sitting behind the ADU Chevrolet Silverado 2500 monster truck, the van looked amazing.

DESTINED FOR ADVENTURE

SUNLAND
23.6 LTD EDITION



JOHN FORD
EDITOR

BUILD QUALITY

Now under new ownership, Sunland is a Queensland builder of high-end caravans with a strong following and a reputation for quality and superior engineering. The new owner has moved to a new factory and modernised the production process for better efficiencies while retaining the brand's DNA.

The body is now composite construction with 32mm panels from Queensland manufacturer Link Composites, forming the walls and a single-piece roof and ends. The shell bonds to a composite floor into a robust monocoque construction. This van is the first in a line of special builds inspired by the ADU team and the gelcoat was specially sourced from Germany to match the Slate Grey colour of their Chev Silverado 2500 tow vehicle.

ABOVE AND BELOW The Sunland is the first in a line of special builds made in conjunction with the ADU team; Massive front storage box for all the tools and toys

A signature feature of Sunland is that it is one of only a few manufacturers that uses a hybrid aluminium/steel chassis. It was developed with the help of aircraft engineers and is a standout feature under the van. The chassis saves several hundred kilos in weight over an equivalent-length steel version. It's matched to a heavy-duty A-frame and comes with a 20-year warranty.

Custom roto-moulded water tanks integrated into the chassis are seen from the sides and the location adjusts for optimum weight distribution. Cruisemaster's ATX Unleashed airbag suspension has M60 shock absorbers, and the van is rated at 4500kg ATM.

Exterior features on the LTD ADU Edition 23.6 include a beautifully finished custom storage box with chargers and cooling fans, a rear bar with storage options, a carpeted tunnel boot, custom streamlined hatches and a carbon pole for Starlink.

The fitout inside is beautifully finished cabinetry with intricate leather trim at the lounge. The combination of a stunning interior and the proven composite aluminium/steel chassis convinced the judges that the Sunland was the winner of Best Build Quality this year.

SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING

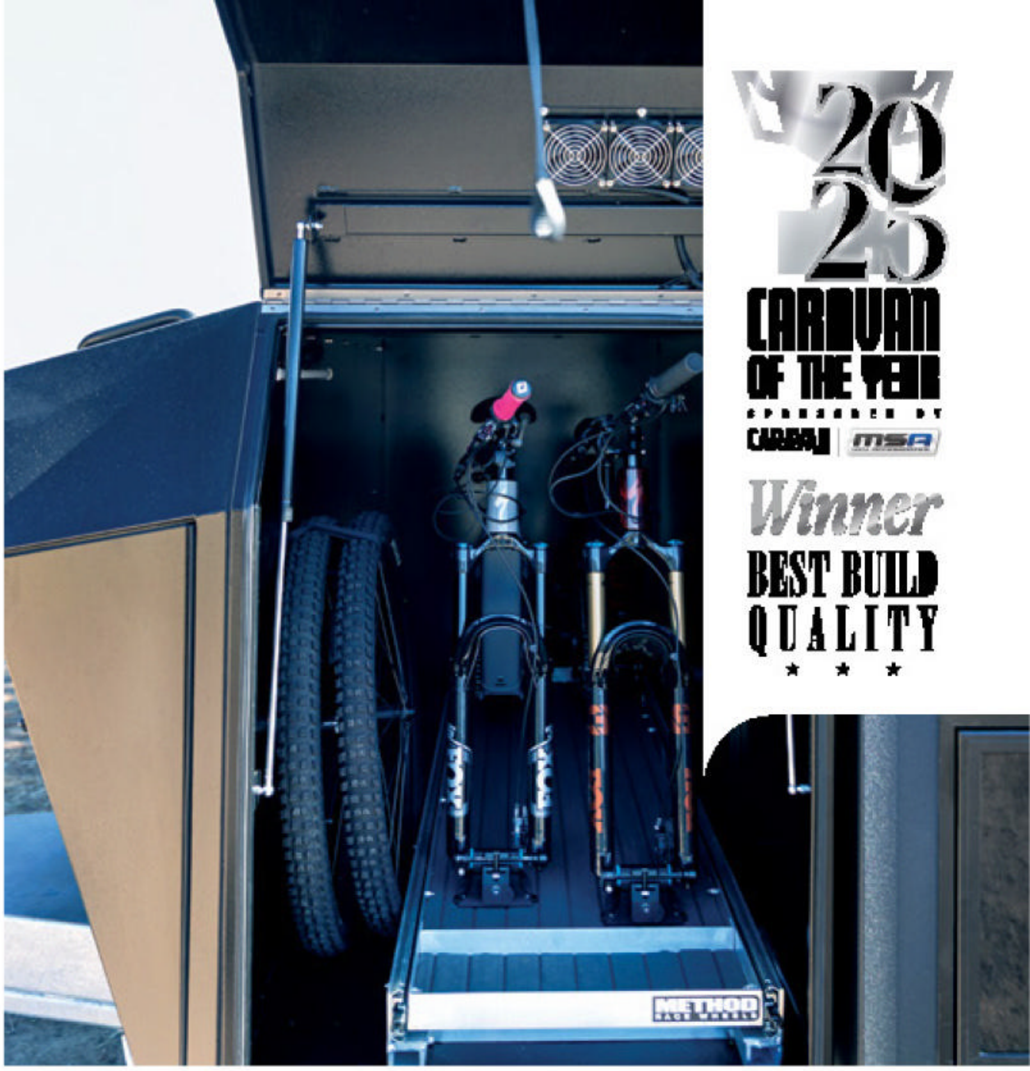
Destined for offroad travel, the sizable 23ft 6in (7.19m) couples van is built for long-term living and has the comforts and self-sufficiency to sustain camping off-grid. A van of this size offers plenty of room to move without feeling confined. The combined ensuite and butler's pantry adds lots of cooking and meal preparation space and increases the already generous storage options, making space for four seasons of clothing. And there's plenty of spots outside to store your adventure gear, fishing tackle and tools.

TOWABILITY

You do not need the massively modified Chev Silverado 2500 of the ADU crew to tow the big LTD ADU Edition 23.6, but you need one capable of its 4500kg ATM. Because the Chev Silverado 2500 is modded up, a light truck licence is required to get behind the wheel. The Chev is a good 300mm higher than standard, so visibility from the custom driver seat is excellent. The Chev torque performance is great, and it pulls steadily away from rest to its cruising speed. It took a few kilometres to feel at home behind the wheel, but I soon felt comfortable with how the van felt. In reality, it's no wider than a stock Chev, which is wide enough, mind you.

The Gen-Y hitch meant no lurching or shock through the drawbar and the van.

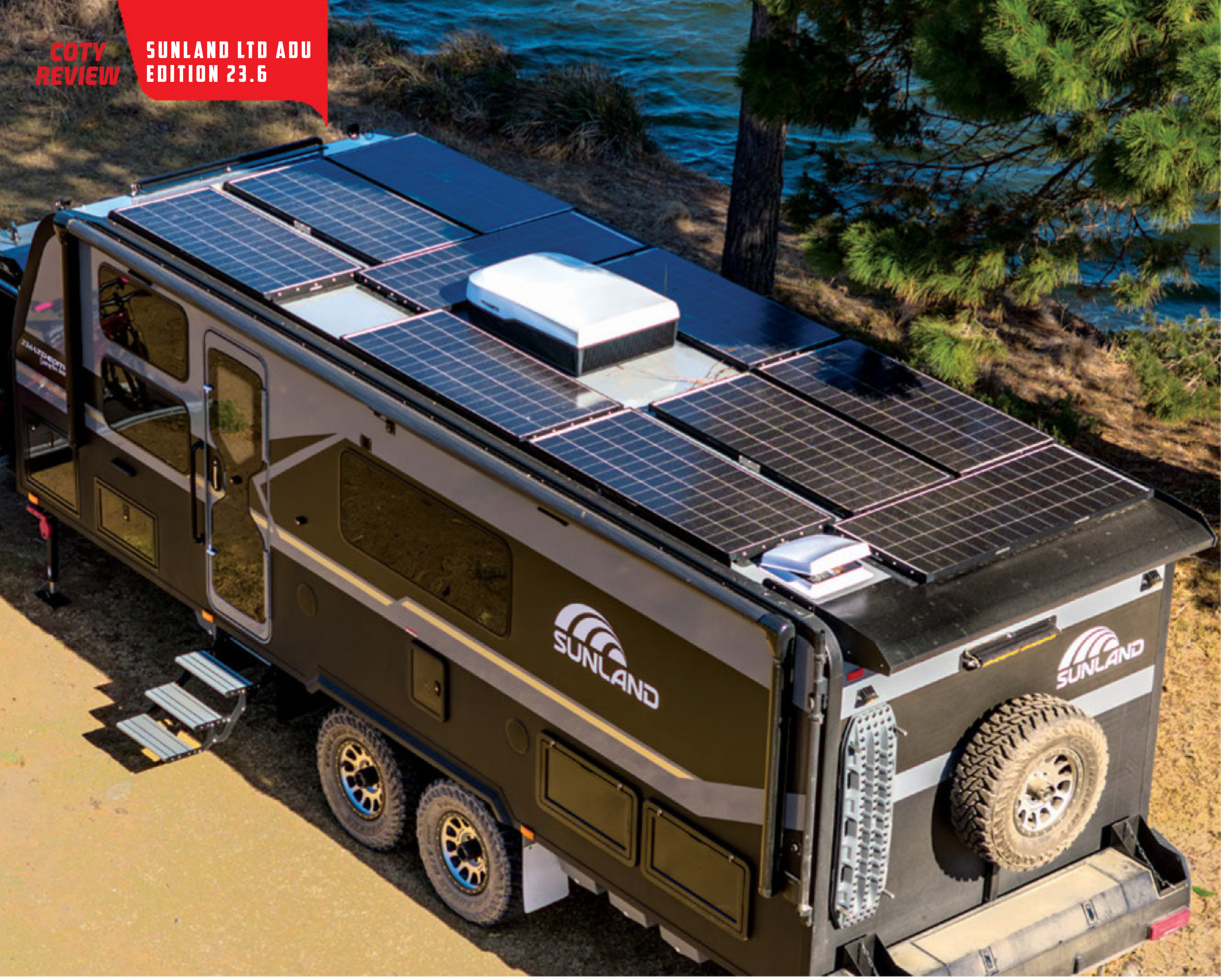
It was a fun ride. Like all these big US rigs, once you are on the open road, it's so comfortable and low revving that you feel like you could easily travel many hundreds of kilometres in a day. However, you will never see me trying to get into a Coles car park in a rig like this.

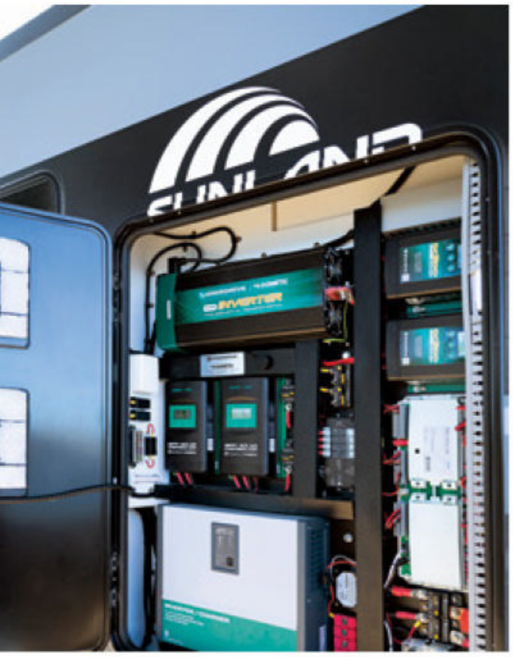


BUILD QUALITY ★

“A signature feature of Sunland is that it is one of only a few manufacturers that uses a hybrid aluminium/steel chassis”

ABOVE AND BELOW Slide-out storage for mountain bikes; The Sunland looks imposing behind the Chev 2500 truck





ABOVE AND BELOW Ten solar panels on the roof; Enerdrive electrics

ALLISON WATT
▸ DEPUTY EDITOR

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

As their name would suggest, the ADU crew travels far and wide on roads less travelled, so being fully self-sufficient is paramount. The LTD ADU Edition 23.6 was another of the completely gasless vans judged at COTY this year.

As you would expect from a van of this calibre, its solar and battery capacity is huge.

On the roof are 10 220W solar panels for a combined 2.2kW of solar energy feeding into three 300Ah Enerdrive B-TEC lithium batteries. There are twin 40A solar controllers and two 50A DC to DC chargers.

Learning from previous experience, Chris and Miriam have opted for two inverters in their van so they can run more than one appliance at a time – one 2600W for running kitchen appliances such as the Thermomix and air fryer, and one 3000W for the air-conditioner and washing machine.

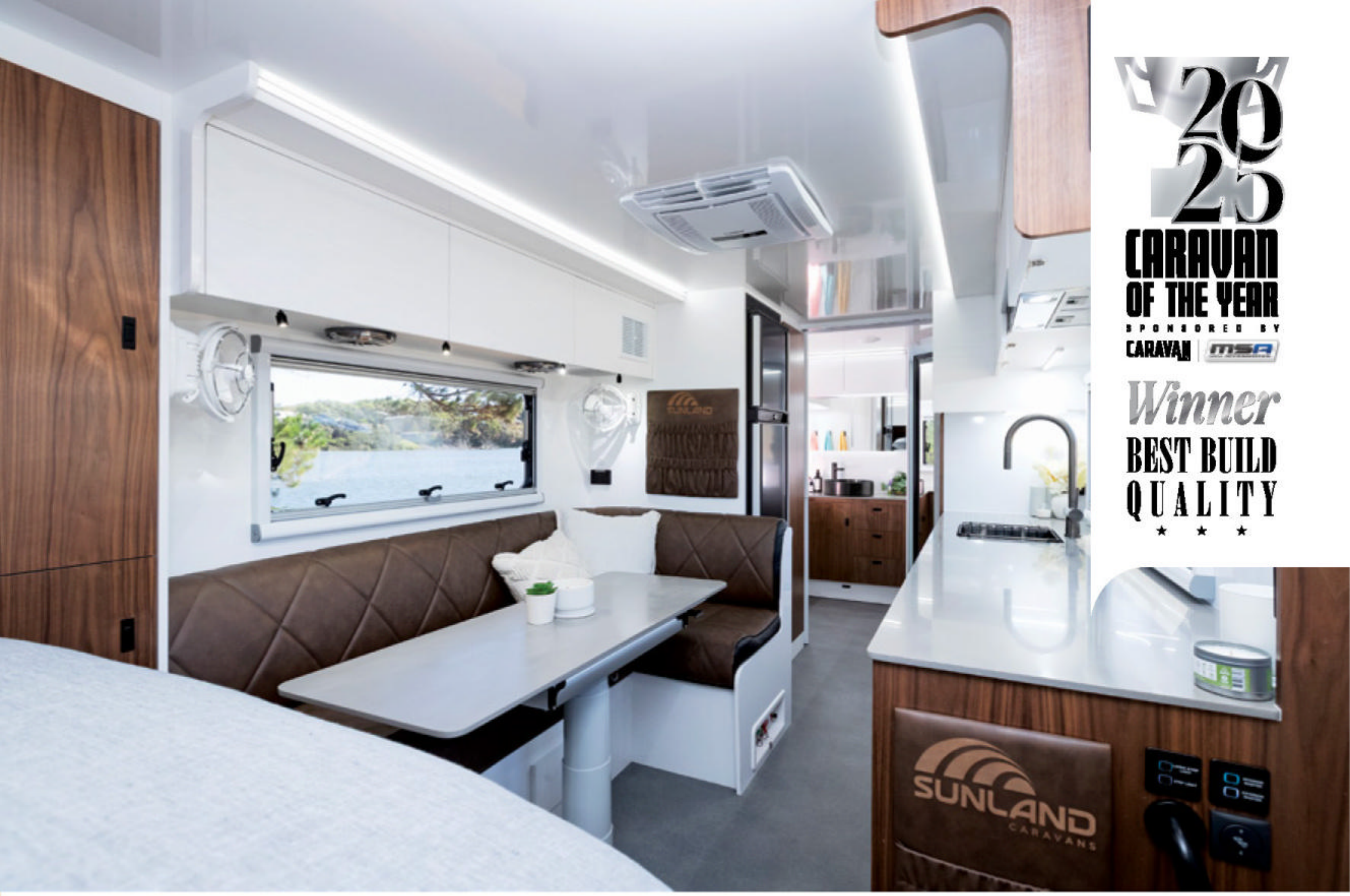
The LTD ADU Edition 23.6 carries a staggering 580L of fresh water, 60L of filtered drinking water and a 130L grey water tank – all cleverly stored in plastic moulded tanks bolted into the C-channel rails in the sub chassis. It's very neat.

The composting toilet is a Tiny by Separett and is a bit different to conventional composting loos in that it separates urine, but number twos are secured in a biodegradable corn starch bag which can then be composted. Heating and hot water are both diesel and all cooking options are electric.

LIVEABILITY

Chris and Miriam have many years of travelling under their belts already, so they know what works for them and what doesn't.

Externally, all bases are covered. There's a place for everything with ample storage



ABOVE The interior decor is described as industrial cigar room

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

> “Learning from previous experience, Chris and Miriam have opted for two *inverters in their van so they can run more than one appliance at a time*”

bins built into the front and rear as well as standard slide-outs and tunnel boots for all their toys. I especially liked the little step on top of the hitch so Chris can reach the winch to get his boat off the roof of the truck.

Inside, the decor is described as industrial cigar room. Think dark brown cow hide upholstery, brushed metal sinks and tapware, polished concrete-look benchtop and flooring, timber panelled cupboards and drawers. It’s classy and luxurious and every bit of available space has been used to its fullest.

Just inside the front entry door the main bed is set very high off the floor and deliberately so. Miriam didn’t want to lose any of the storage space taken up by the tunnel boot underneath so raising the bed has given her back all the underbed storage. You can’t walk around the bed either, as there are storage compartments either side and at the end of the bed for shoes and the like.

The spacious L-shaped leather lounge is located on the far side with the kitchen opposite. The kitchen has plenty of bench space, overhead and under-bench cupboards and drawers, a half-height cupboard and a full-height pantry. The door on the compressor fridge opens both ways, which is a nice touch in the liveability department.

The ADU crew have plenty of options in the cooking department, with the portable inducton cooktop (which can be neatly tucked away in its drawer inside), air fryer, multi cooker, Thermomix for indoor meal prep and the electric Traeger smoker outside.

The LTD ADU Edition 23.6 wins the prize for having the biggest bathroom we saw at COTY this year – it’s huge and as well as incorporating the usual things you would find in a bathroom it’s dual function as a butler’s pantry is handy for Miriam when she wants to cook for prolonged periods. The area would also be big enough for a home office, if you’re so inclined.

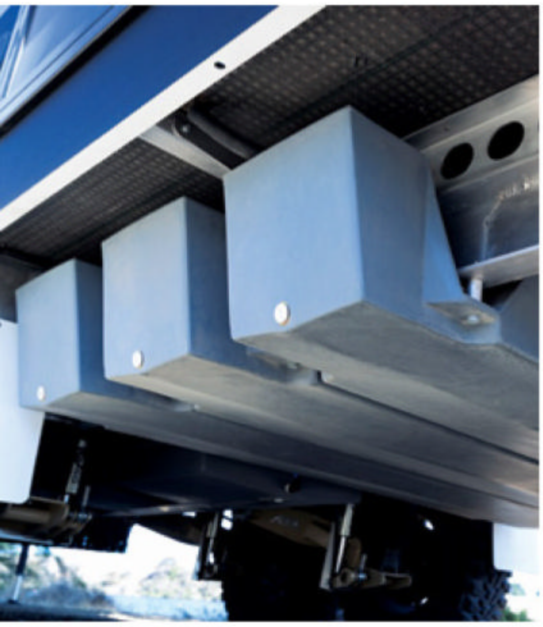
VALUE FOR MONEY

The LTD ADU Edition 23.6 is priced from $249,990, but the van we judged had been customised for full-time life on the road and included an additional $50k of optional extras.

These included bespoke rectangular external hatches, brushed sinks and tapware, Starlink attachments, a slide for their electric mountain bikes in the front storage locker, bespoke external composite panel colour to match their big Chev Silverado 2500 tow vehicle and a woodgrain veneer for the internal cupboards which alone is valued at $4500. At that price, it’s clearly not going to be within the budgets of most caravanners, but Chris and Miriam are not your average caravanners. They live in their van full-time, travelling to all the far-flung corners of the country sharing their travels – and promoting the Sunland brand – to their hundreds of thousands of social media followers. So, it’s all relative.

INNOVATION ★

“The purpose-designed water tanks are roto-moulded, they fit neatly along the chassis rails and look like part of the structure, not an add-on”



ABOVE AND BELOW The bed is raised to allow for storage underneath; Moulded water tanks fit around the chassis rail

MALCOLM STREET
▸ **FIELD EDITOR**

EASE OF USE

Given the van and tow vehicle’s combined length of 15.4m (50ft 5in), it’s no small towing proposition. However, with the right vehicle up front, like the Chevrolet Silverado 2500 we were using, there were no problems. In this case, given the Silverado’s 6000kg GVM, an LR truck licence is required, which is a little unusual.

Inside the LTD ADU Edition 23.6, the raised bed height does require a small step. The L-shaped lounge and height-adjustable table are great for two, and we’ve extolled the virtues of the kitchen storage and bench space. There’s always plenty of debate about the most user-friendly microwave oven location – in the overhead locker area or below the kitchen bench. There’s a nice compromise here: above a cupboard but below the overheads.

In the rear, the larger-than-usual bathroom is first in class for its roominess, storage and bench space. The 12V electrics with enough capacity for sustained off-grid living are controlled by the Simarine Nereidi Digital Monitoring and Switching System by Enerdrive | Dometic, with the touch panel located by the entry door. This system allows full control and visibility over all the onboard systems and remembers previous settings even after the master internal switch is turned off.

The charger/inverter units and MPPT controllers are in the purpose-designed offside cabinet behind the fridge. A van like this will be travelling on many dirt roads, and the interior looks designed to be very easy to clean.

INNOVATION

I’ve seen several Sunland innovations before, and although they are not commonly used

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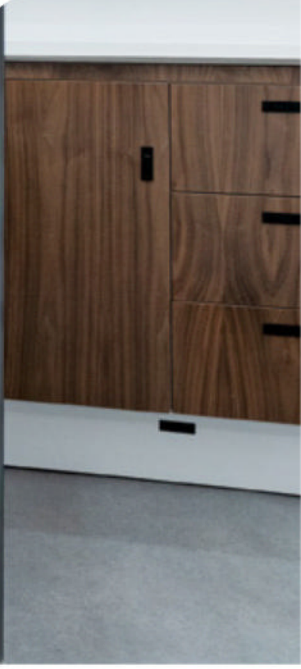

by industry, they are still relevant. The standout feature in the COTY-reviewed van is the hybrid aluminium/steel chassis, designed for lighter weight and strength. Of note are also the purpose-designed water tanks. Roto-moulded, they fit neatly along the chassis rails and look like part of the structure, not an add-on.

The wing/air foil at the rear of the van might look like a gimmick, but it is designed to allow for extra solar panel capacity. I like to ride a bicycle when I can, so I was particularly impressed by the drawbar-mounted bike storage box. Complete with a slide-out tray, it made getting the bikes out relatively easy.

Inside the van, the large bathroom is the standout feature. It is not for everyone, I know, but it adds a new dimension to caravan design, particularly for those who are on the road full-time. It also greatly increased the internal storage capacity of the van.

CUSTOMER CARE

Sunland is a Queensland-based (Caboolture) manufacturer. Its warranty is well laid out on the company website. Sunland offers a five-year manufacturer's warranty and 20 years on the hybrid aluminium/steel chassis, which shows great confidence in the product. Items like the fridge, portable induction hob, microwave oven and air-conditioner are covered by the respective OEMs.

The warranty only applies to the original purchaser. Like many manufacturers, Sunland requires regular servicing as a condition of the warranty and won't honour any warranty where the van has been used for rental hire or commercial use. Sunland doesn't have dealers in all states and territories, but warranty matters can be handled by approved repairers. Sunland's factory facilities are quite extensive and include a well-set-up service and repair centre.

ABOVE AND BELOW The massive bathroom doubles as a butler's pantry; The fridge door opens both ways and there's plenty of pantry storage

RIGHT AND BELOW The Sunland LTD ADU Edition 23.6 won Best Build Quality; A huge shower in the huge bathroom

SUNLAND LTD ADU EDITION 23.6

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Overall length 9.98m (32ft 7in)
Body length 7.19m (23ft 6in)
Width 2.48m (8ft 1in)
Height 3.08m (10ft 1in)
Tare 3570kg
ATM 4500kg
Payload 930kg (calculated)
Ball weight at tare 308kg
Ball to tare ratio 8.6% (calculated)

EXTERNAL

Frame Frameless
Cladding Fibreglass composite sandwich panel with EPS foam
Chassis Sunland hybrid aluminium/steel chassis
Suspension Cruisemater ATX Unleashed with M60 shock absorbers and Cruisemaster BCS
Coupling Cruisemaster DO45
Brakes 12in drum
Wheels 17in Method alloy wheels and Yokohama Geolandar MT GO03 295/70R17 tyres
Water 1 x 190L and 3 x 130L freshwater (580L total), 1 x 60L filtered drinking water, 1 x 130L grey water
Battery 3 x 300Ah Enerdrive B-TEC lithium
Inverter 1 x 3000W and 1 x 2600W Enerdrive
Solar 10 x 220W
Air-conditioner Dometic FreshJet 7 Series
Gas N/A
Sway control Bosch TSC and TRD rear sway bar

INTERNAL

Cooking Portable induction hotplate
Microwave Flatbed
Fridge Dometic compressor with dual opening door
Bathroom Combined ensuite and butler's pantry with separate corner shower and Separett Tiny composting toilet
Washing machine 3kg NCE front load washer/dryer combo
Hot water Diesel HWS and heating

PRICE FROM $249,990

OPTIONS FITTED

- Veneer woodgrain cupboard door pack
- Separett Tiny composting toilet
- Recovery tow points
- Non-standard vinyl flooring
- 40L diesel tank
- 5 x Yokohama Geolandar MT GO03 295/70R17 tyres
- MAXTRAX upgrade
- 3kg NCE front-loader combo washing machine and dryer, wall mounted
- ADU composite panel colour and entrance door
- Flip down kick panel doors
- Bike slide in toolbox
- SpaceTek Starlink Gen 3 attachments
- ABI Design sinks/tapware
- Lined entertainment hatch
- Water tank stoneguards
- ADU rectangular hatches

PRICE AS SHOWN $299,990

MORE INFORMATION

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Caboolture Qld 4510
P: 07 5499 2250
E: sales@sunlandcaravans.com.au
W: sunlandcaravans.com.au

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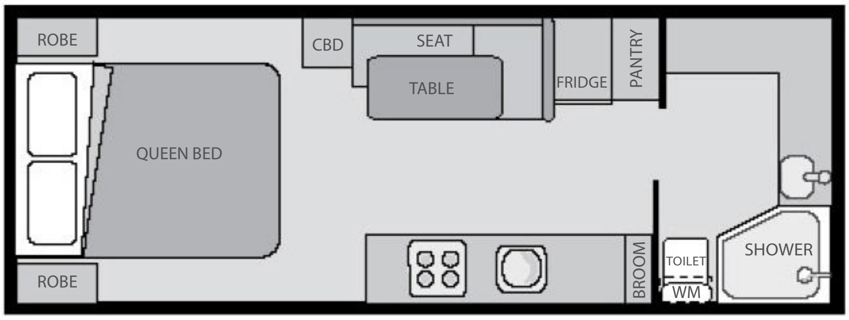
X-FACTOR

In many ways, the LTD ADU Edition 23.6 is a standard Sunland product, meaning it stands out in the crowd. Its unique construction won it the Best Build Quality award this year, and some other X-factors that draw attention are the external storage bins on the front drawbar and the bespoke storage box on the rear side. Inside, the interior has a very stylish look, and the raised bed is a little different, as is the storage box at the end of the bed. The overall look has a fit-for-purpose look about it. One intended for travellers who intend to be on the road.



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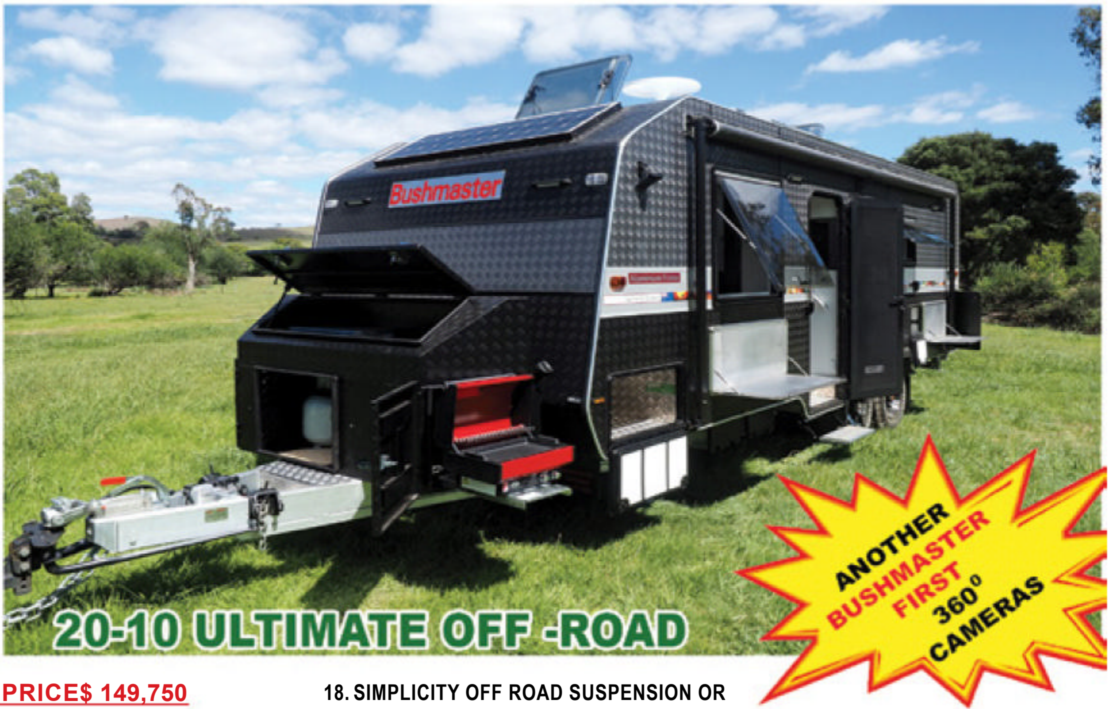
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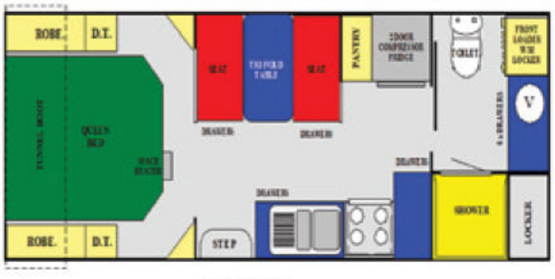
ROBE.
D.T.
TUNNEL BOOT
QUEEN BED
SPACE HEATER
SEAT
TRI FOLD TABLE
SEAT
PANTRY
2 DOOR COMPRESSOR FRIDGE
TOILET
FRONT LOADER W/M LOCKER
V
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DRAWERS
DRAWERS
DRAWERS
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Finalist

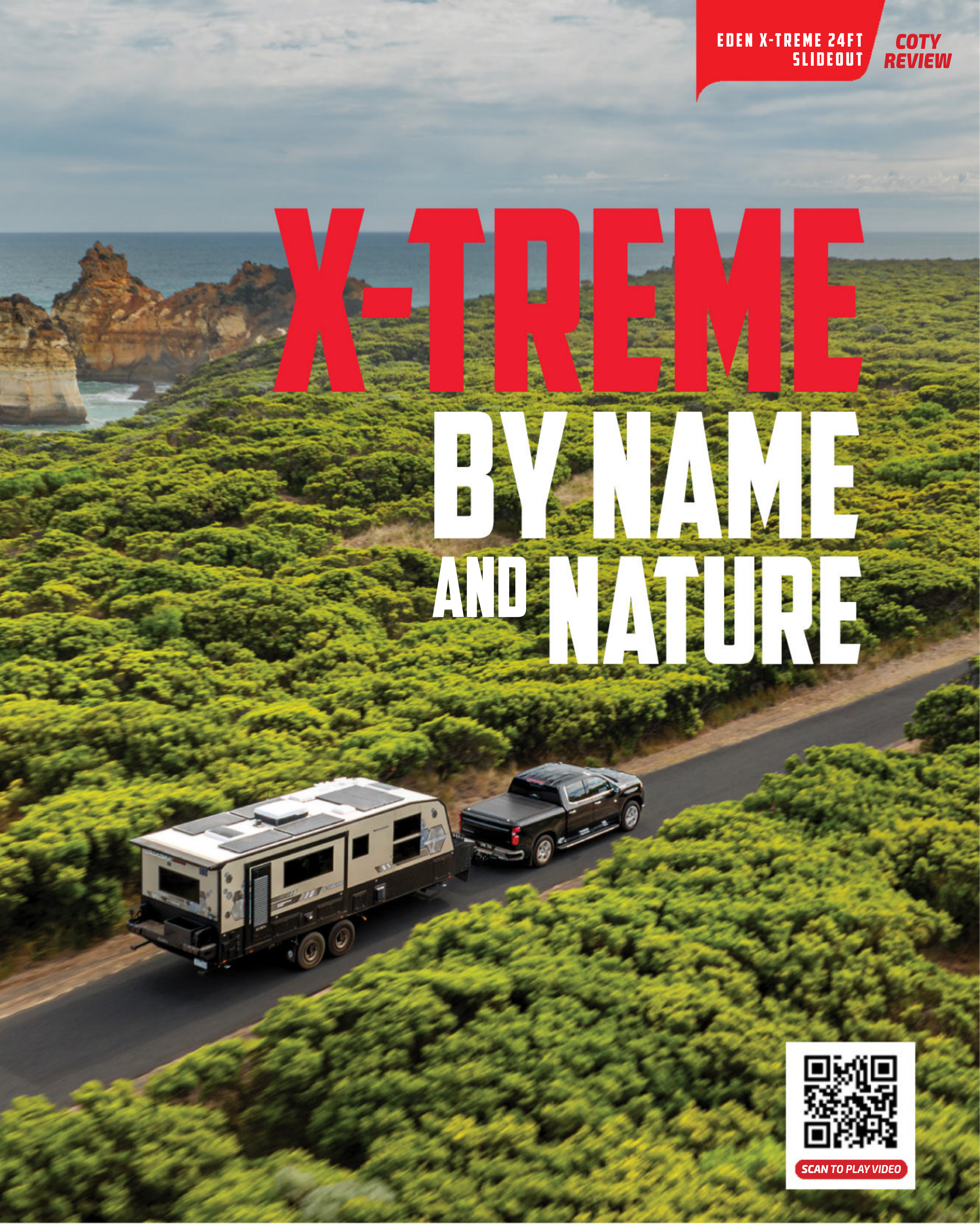
* * *

First time entrants in Caravan of the Year, Eden Caravans wowed the judges with its impressive 24ft Eden X-Treme built for company owners, Paul and Mary Nedanis.

***Words** COTY judges **Pics and video** Josh Hanger, Josh Robinson, Ted Airey, Graham Neander*

A 24ft (7.3m) couples caravan is already big – but add a slide-out club lounge and a really clever layout and you have an apartment on wheels. The Eden X-Treme 24ft really is the ultimate in luxury touring.

X-TREME BY NAME AND NATURE



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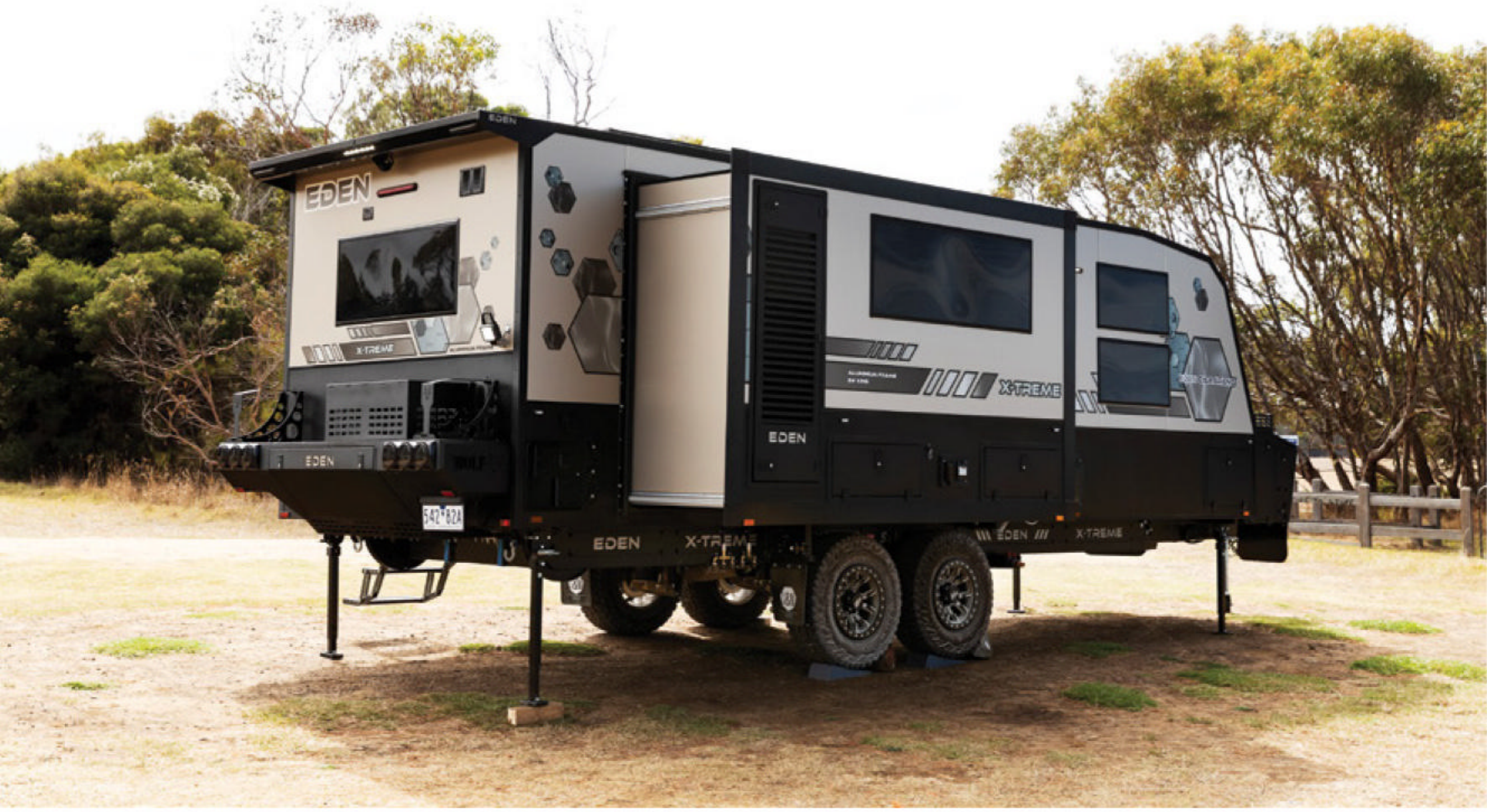

MALCOLM STREET
FIELD EDITOR

BUILD QUALITY

Like a few other caravans at COTY 2025, Eden Caravans' X-Treme was built for the company owners, Paul and Mary Nedanis. You might be expecting an extra special van, which it is in some ways, but the X-Treme is built with the same care as the rest of the Eden fleet.

A little differently, the X-Treme van has a truss chassis with a 100mm (4in) top section, a 75mm (3in) bottom section and 130mm (5in) in between. It's designed for the dual benefit of strength and weight saving (about 50kg-60kg) and gives a flat floor (no wheel arch intrusions) in the van. C-section aluminium (25mm) is used for the frame, all Henrob riveted. Aluminium composite cladding is used on the walls and roof, while aluminium extrusions on all the edges keeps everything together and watertight. For optimum insulation, the composite roof is 30mm thick and the floor is over 40mm thick. The overall impression is of a van that is well put together, particularly in the chassis area, which is the easiest to see and is all very neatly done.

At the rear, the roof extension and the Wolf Fabrications rear bar with its jerry can holders, drawer and firewood box look the part and give the van's rear quite a standout appearance. Likewise, at the front, the drawbar storage box is designed and made well and has a stylish look.

Inside the X-Treme, all the cabinetry is lightweight ply timber, CNC machine cut and edge banded. Like the exterior, the interior is immaculately finished. Particularly eye-catching is the brass-coloured tapware and the tan-coloured leatherette used on the slide-out club lounge; it offers a subtle suggestion to sit down and relax. As might be expected on a van like this, everything opens and closes smoothly as it should.

SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING

Owner vans sometimes require a bit of thought, mainly because they are built to said owner's desires and not always for someone who might buy the van. There is no such problem here because the 24ft van, although very highly appointed, is very much a practical layout. It is designed for offroad travel and with a comfortable lifestyle in mind. That's helped by the offside slide-out, which greatly increases the interior space. It also allows for a slightly different layout, one with a rear kitchen, the club lounge and fridge in the slide-out and a split bathroom adjacent to the forward bedroom. The rear kitchen bench space might look small at first glance, but it is augmented by the nearside bench that offers cupboard space and houses the main television (more on this later).

The X-Treme 24ft Slideout model has a good payload of 700kg, which is needed, apart from anything else, for the 475L of freshwater capacity. There's plenty of internal and external storage capacity. The latter includes the front and rear storage and the usual tunnel boot space which includes a slide-out barbecue. Also, for those who enjoy an al fresco lifestyle, there's a drawer fridge built into the nearside wall. Like many vans with a high-powered 12V electrical system, the inverter/charger, MPPT solar charge controllers and related electrics are fitted into an external wall panel. In this case, it's located behind the fridge in the slide-out. It's relatively easy to access, but shorter people might require a small step.

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BUILD QUALITY ★

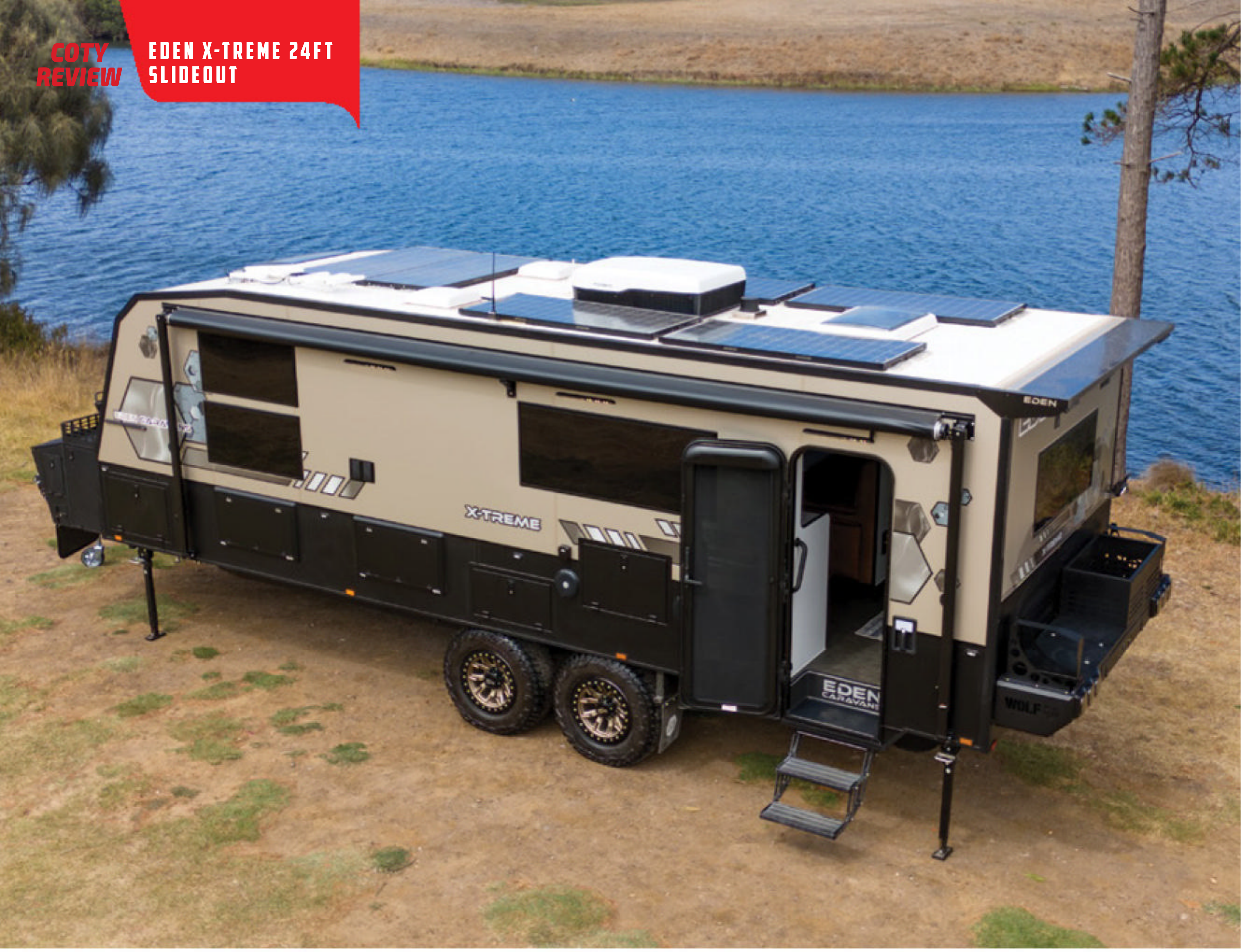
> “The Wolf Fabrications rear bar with its jerry can holders, drawer and firewood box *look the part and give the van’s rear quite a standout appearance*”

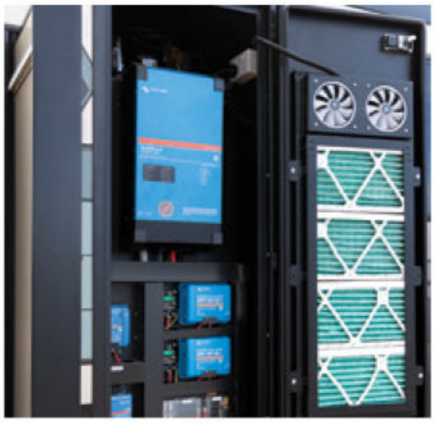
TOWABILITY

The Eden X-Treme has an external length of 7.3m (24ft) and a tare mass of 3800kg, so it’s not a small van and well into the towing territory of something like the Chev Silverado LTZ we used for the towing. The Silverado has the necessary maximum tow rating of 4500kg but is a big vehicle with a length of 5.9m (19ft 4in), resulting in an overall towing length of nearly 16m (53ft). That can be daunting at first glance, but the Silverado certainly has the capacity to make sure the towing isn’t too stressful. The 6.2L petrol V8 engine delivers plenty of power (313kW) and torque (624Nm) through the 10-speed torque converter, but it’s not quite as torquey as the 6.6L turbo diesel engine.

Convenient on the Silverado are the side cameras that come on each time the indicator is used. Great on tight corners, given the Silverado’s large turning circle (14.1m/46ft). On the road and on the bush tracks during our tow test, the X-Treme glided along very well on its Cruisemaster ATX Level Four airbag suspension with barely a tail wag or too much fore and aft pitching.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Water tanks underneath; A big slide-out for offroad comfort; It’s not a small van and will require a suitable tow vehicle





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The neat external electrics board; The Weber slides out and then swivels; Plenty of solar panels; The huge slide-out moves the club lounge and fridge

LIVEABILITY ★

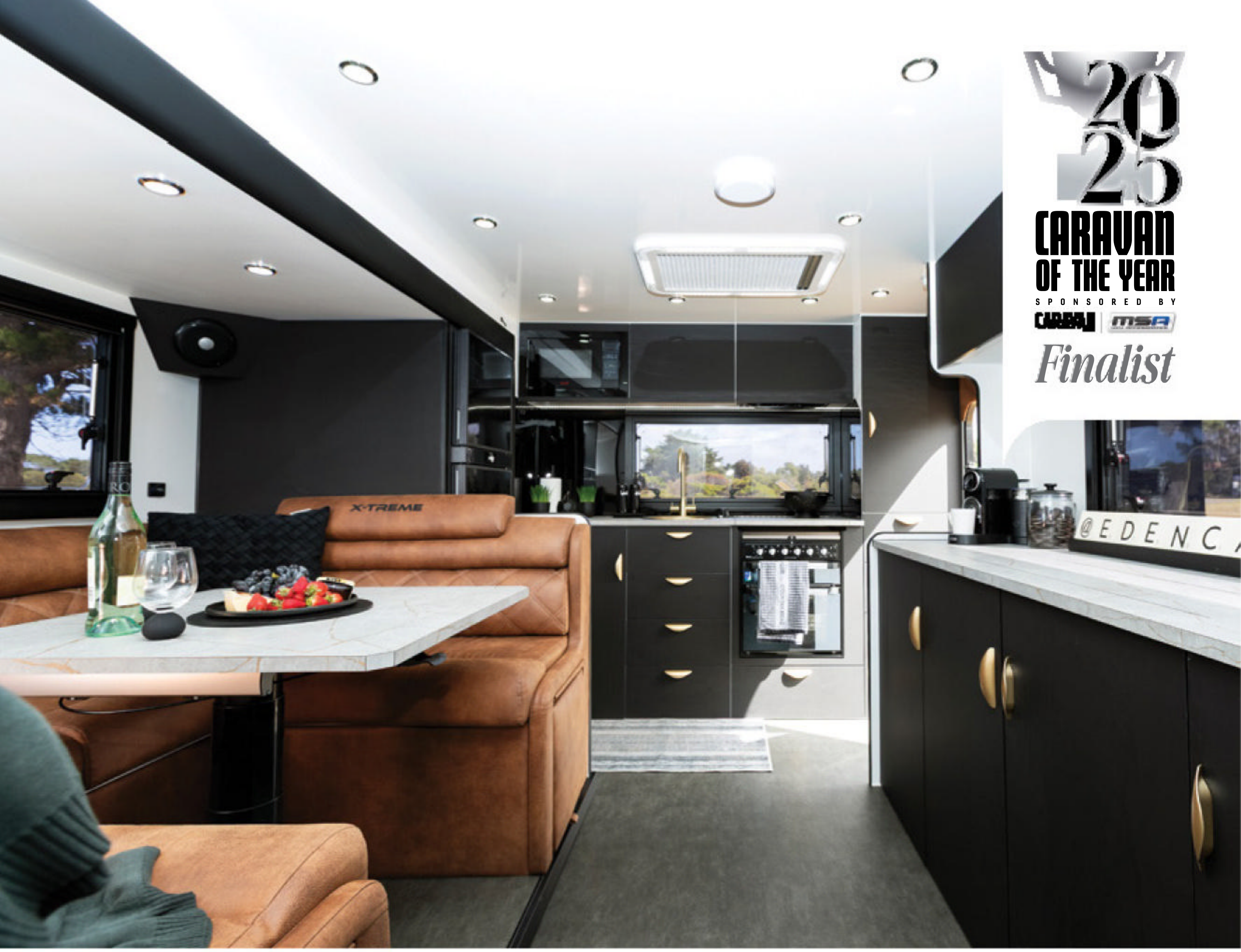
> *"The impression upon stepping aboard* is breathtaking"

JOHN FORD
▶ **EDITOR**

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Extreme in name and character, this impressive Eden packs a hefty punch with its off-grid capabilities. This van allows couples to find their favourite camping spot and stay there comfortably and without compromise. The amenity of the van offers comfort, and the solar setup delivers ample electrical power to run appliances for as long as they wish.

Six 200W roof-mounted solar panels deliver a generous 1200W to charge two 460Ah Arizon/Victron lithium batteries. Two 50A MPPT chargers efficiently convert the solar energy into 12V power, while a 12V Victron inverter/charger provides 3000W to operate 240V accessories. Battery performance is monitored through a Garmin screen, allowing you to keep track



of operations, and there's a phone app for remote checking. As Malcolm mentioned, the Arizon/Victron installed electrics board is located on the driver-side, and it was one of the neatest I have seen anywhere.

The van isn't wholly electric. Gas bottles are used for cooking and heating, which might be a good backup plan for extended periods of cloudy weather. However, modern electrical systems are very efficient and reliable, and I might consider foregoing the gas and using a diesel heater to save weight. There's also a slide for a generator as a backup.

Five 95L freshwater tanks is a respectable amount, but the 700kg payload leaves only 225kg of carrying capacity if you fill the tanks and want to stay legal. There is also a 95L grey water tank for national park stays. The cassette toilet will probably need attention after a week, so I suggest installing a composting toilet if camping remotely.

LIVEABILITY

Designed specifically for Paul and Mary, the van showcases trendy design concepts and colour selections that create a welcoming and functional interior. The impression upon stepping aboard is breathtaking. A 24ft van is already larger and more upscale than average for a couple, and the addition of a slide-out for the club lounge enhances the luxury further.

The faux leather in Eastwood Fawn by Warwick Fabrics paired with the matte black cabinets create a winning combination, lending a classy, almost regal impression. Positioning the fridge in the slide-out has opened up extra kitchen space for a full-width layout across the back of the van, as well as increased prep space on the passenger side. Storage is abundant: in large toolboxes and hatches outside, as well as in multiple cupboards, drawers and beneath the bed inside.

The club lounge has room for a couple to spread out or entertain guests who might marvel at the 40in television rising from the bench opposite. This magically appearing feature is sometimes seen in luxury yachts, so it's another superb addition to the Eden X-Treme 24ft.

An advantage of a larger van is the ability to include a proper-sized ensuite. The X-Treme uses one of my favourite layouts, locating it in the centre of the van. This design gives easy ensuite access while ensuring maximum privacy and separation of the bedroom.

The bed has its own enclosed space and has the same fitout and feel as the living area and includes a padded and pleated bedhead that adds to the high-end impression

VALUE FOR MONEY

This is not an entry-level van. The X-Treme 24ft Slideout is crafted with care by a boutique builder, where ensuring everything is done correctly and looks perfect is the driver, so the vans take time to build. All components are top quality, and the $254,990 price reflects that. Against luxury offroad vans in today's market, the X-Treme is good value.

Couples who have the means to search for their dream van will appreciate this high-end van's exclusivity, superb appearance and practicality.

ABOVE The spacious bedroom suite is well away from the main living area

ALLISON WATT
DEPUTY EDITOR

EASE OF USE

Paul and Mary put a lot of thought into how they will use their van and it shows in many of the little details that are not immediately obvious.

There is no doubt that it's big, so it's not going to fit onto an average site at a caravan park, but that's not how Paul and Mary intend to use it.

Once they pull up to camp, the Cruisemaster ATX airbag suspension is used for auto-levelling, which is a handy feature.

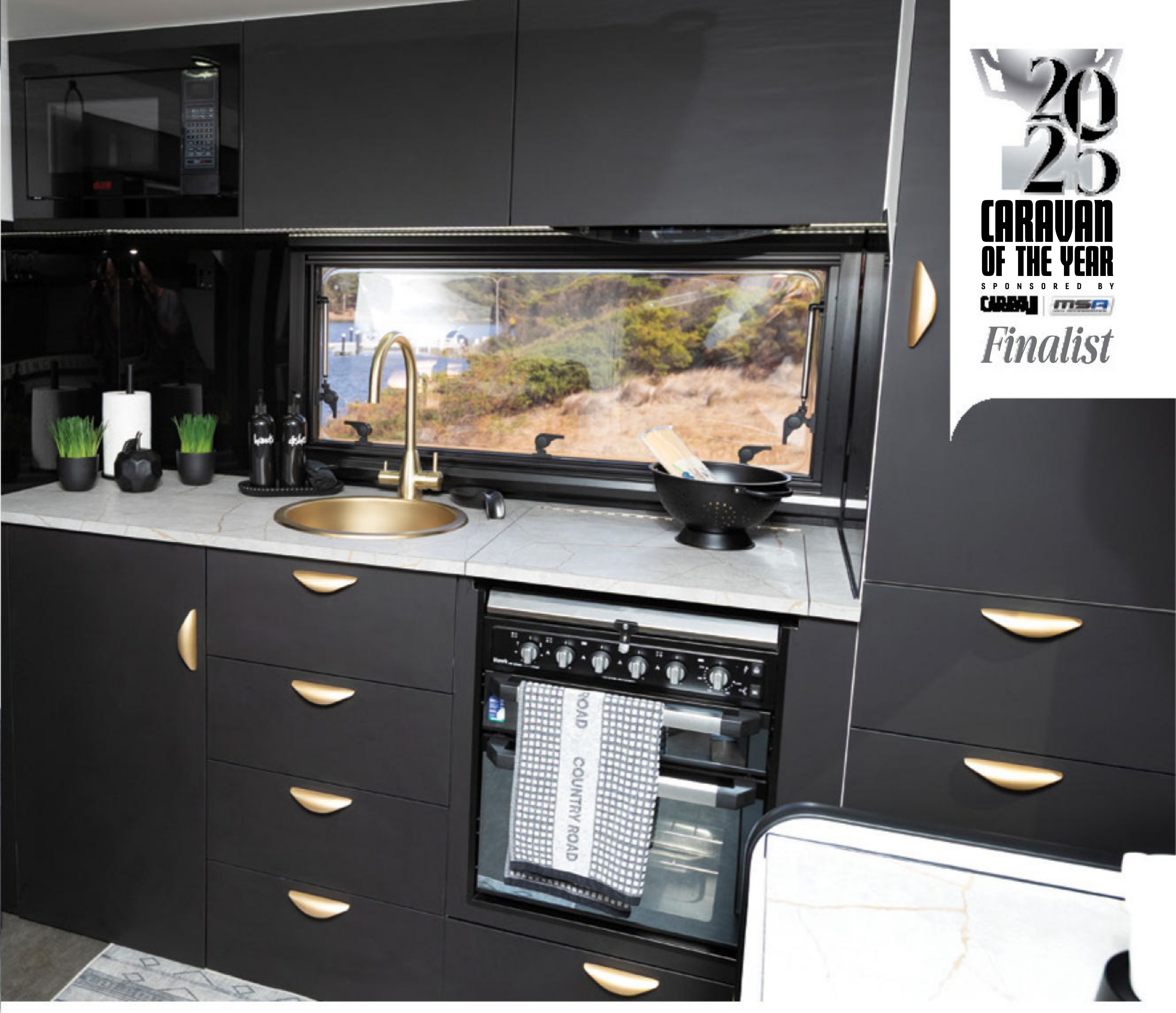
Externally, Paul has everything where he needs it. The toolbox up front has a slide for the Weber which then swivels to be parallel with the van or any angle you need to avoid smoke and smells blowing indoors. There are two picnic tables, an entertainment hatch and a drawer fridge which slides out. On the other side is the generator slide plus a secure storage bin for gas bottles and other bits and pieces. And there's more external storage built into the custom rear bumper.

An electric step provides entry via the rear door, straight into the kitchen across the rear of the van. This is a surprisingly workable space with a round sink and a good amount of bench space, microwave overheard, cooktop and full oven and plenty of cupboards and drawers.

Containing the kitchen to the rear like this provides the space for the van's piece de resistance – the slide-out club lounge in tan leather is big enough for six adults (they've tested it) to eat around the table or watch television on the massive 40in screen. The bench where the television lives also houses the 3.3kg washing machine so there's easy access to outside for hanging out the clothes.

Paul and Mary also designed the club lounge to convert to a double bed for when their grandkids have sleepovers.

The X-Treme's central bathroom/front bedroom layout is popular for couples who like to have some personal space. Both areas are beautifully appointed with quality components and plenty of storage. There's another television in the bedroom if you want to watch separate shows.



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Finalist

INNOVATION

The innovative layout of the Eden X-Treme was like nothing else we saw at the COTY competition this year and really made it stand out from the pack.

The rear kitchen is much bigger and workable than it initially appears thanks to its clever layout and placement of appliances. The large club lounge and fridge slide out on the offside, leaving plenty of space for entertaining inside.

We didn't see another 40in television emerging from its own bench at the touch of a button, either, so that was a first for me.

There are no physical light switches in the X-Treme – all the lights and electrics are controlled by an app on a smart phone.

Even the rounded brackets under the rear corners of the chassis to prevent it from bottoming out when driving on rough roads was something new for us.

EASE OF USE ★

"The slide-out club lounge in tan leather is big *enough for six adults (they've tested it)"*

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The 40in TV emerges at the touch of a button; The rear kitchen is functional with loads of storage; Luxury living on the slide-out club lounge

ABOVE AND RIGHT The central bathroom; The X-Treme is made for off-grid travel

EDEN X-TREME 24FT SLIDEOUT

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES
Overall length 10.05m (32ft 10in)
Body length 7.3m (24ft)
Width 2.28m (7ft 5in)
Height 3.3m (10ft 8in)
Tare 3800kg
ATM 4500kg
Payload 700kg (calculated)
Ball weight at tare 200kg
Ball to tare ratio 5.3% (calculated)

EXTERNAL
Frame Aluminium
Cladding Composite aluminium
Chassis S&M Chassis truss
Suspension Cruisemaster ATX Level 4 airbag
Coupling Cruisemaster DO45
Brakes Disc
Wheels 17in Dirty Life DT-1 Satin Gold with Mickey Thompson Baja Boss A/T 285/70R17 tyres
Water 5 x 95L freshwater, 1 x 95L grey water
Battery 2 x 460A Arizon (Victron) lithium
Inverter 3000W Arizon (Victron)
Solar 6 x 200W
Air-conditioner Dometic FreshJet 7 Series
Gas 2 x 9kg
Sway control N/A
Cooking Weber barbecue on slide-out
Fridge Drawer fridge on slide-out

INTERNAL
Cooking Swift four-burner (three gas, one electric) and fan forced full oven
Microwave Swift Dluxx 20L
Fridge 224L Dometic compressor
Bathroom Split centre ensuite with cassette toilet and separate shower
Washing machine 3.3kg front loader
Hot water 28L gas and 240V

PRICE FROM $249,990

OPTIONS FITTED
- Dual Safety Dave camera
- Garmin RV 895 GPS Navigator
- Chevrolet reversing camera

PRICE AS SHOWN $254,990

MORE INFORMATION
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CUSTOMER CARE

Eden Caravans offers a three-year structural warranty and three years against leakage and water damage.

Warranty documents are provided to customers at handover, but they are not publicly available on the company's website.

The document contains a page of exclusions including water damage caused by creek crossings, flooding and so on, and damage caused by excessive speed in offroad conditions, all of which are reasonable, but I'd advise that customers read the warranty documents carefully before heading off.

If there is an issue with any appliances in the van, customers will be directed to those manufacturers in the first instance.

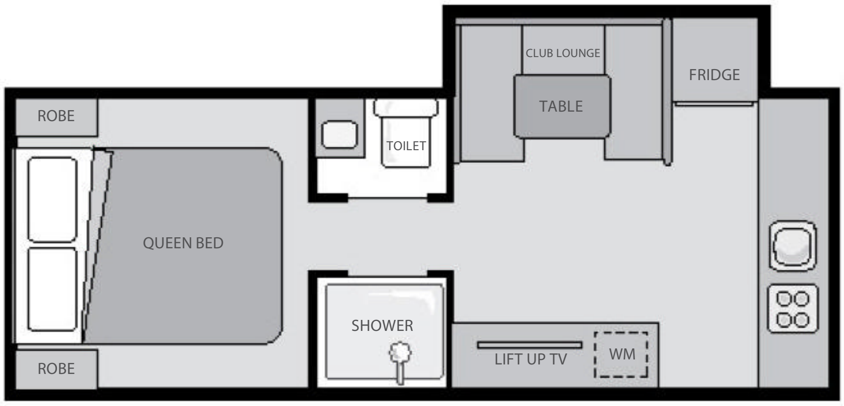
Paul personally deals with all enquiries regarding the van's electrical system.

X-FACTOR

There were a few 'wows' coming from the mouths of judges when we stepped into the Eden X-Treme. While on the outside it looks big and tough and ready to go anywhere, inside is akin to a small home on wheels – beautifully decorated and presented by Mary.

Its innovative layout ensures there is plenty of room for couples who like to get off the beaten track without sacrificing any of the creature comforts of home. Plenty of room for meal preparation in the rear kitchen, enough space for six adults to comfortably enjoy a meal around the slide-out club lounge or watch the footy on the giant TV, a well-appointed split central bathroom and a private and cosy bedroom retreat up front.

If you want to go caravanning in style – this is the van for you.



EXODUS
OFF ROAD

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COMPLETE CAMPSITE
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EQUAL OVERALL
WINNER

COMPLETE CAMPSITE
EXODUS 18

★★★
BEST INNOVATION
BEST FAMILY HYBRID
★★★

WHY I LOVE THE EXODUS 16 -
- Let's hear from Chris and Jan

"For me it was the outside kitchen, the fact that everything was there. From my view I didn't want to be stuck inside because all the action happens outside, and the outside kitchen means you are a part of it." – Jan

"I would say the easier way of doing things such as the switch that makes the roof go up and this awning is easy to put out unlike others, so it is a combination of easier things to do." – Chris

"We're always researching what our next camper will be, but it wasn't until we went into towns like Thargomindah or Eromanga that we saw the off-road Exodus 16 camper and knew it was the one."
- Chris

For Exodus sales and general enquiries, please contact us on
Phone: 0412 656 271 | Email: david@bwcy.com.au | 39B Munibung Road, Cardiff NSW 2285

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★ ★ ★

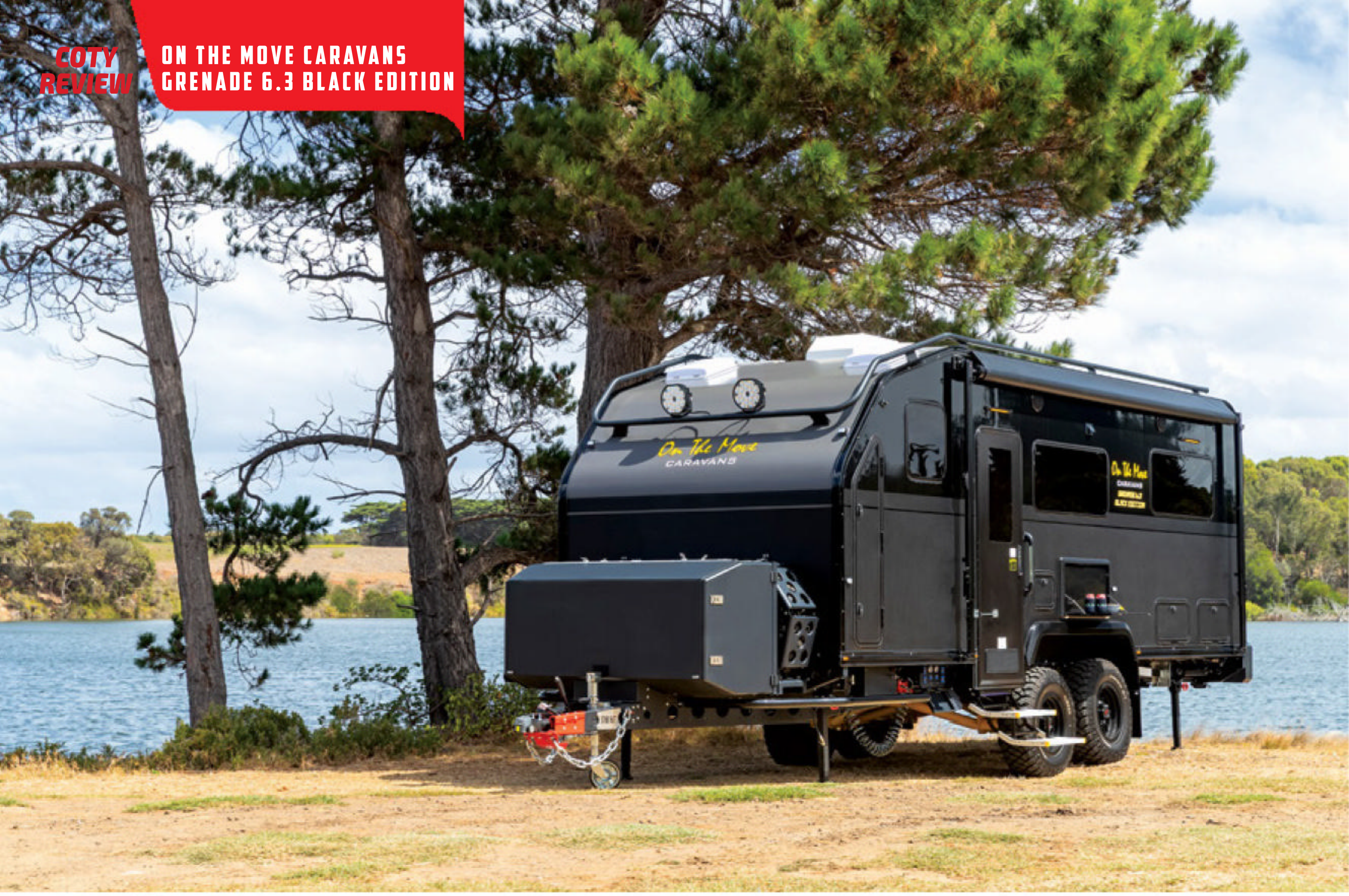
Dark-coloured vans are becoming increasingly cool, so On The Move Caravans met the challenge with the all-black edition of its popular Grenade 6.3 model.

Words COTY judges **Pics and video** Josh Hanger, Josh Robinson, Ted Airey, Graham Neander

On The Move Caravans is a company that's on the move, pardon the pun. Since the current owners moved much of the manufacturing process offshore to China and introduced several new production techniques, there have been a number of developments, including the Grenade 6.3 Black Edition.

BACK IN BLACK

SCAN TO PLAY VIDEO



ALLISON WATT

DEPUTY EDITOR

BUILD QUALITY

The On The Move Caravans Grenade 6.3 Black Edition is an imported Chinese van, however its construction method differed significantly to other imported offerings at this year's COTY.

It's a completely frameless van. The walls and roof are all one piece (no joins) constructed of composite panels with a foam core sandwiched by aluminium panels. There's no timber anywhere, except the chopping board that comes with the external kitchen. Judges were shown a model of the unique lock and block method of joining the panels which is patented. All cables are all neatly tucked away in corner panels in the roof so there's no cabling through any of the walls.

The chassis is a high tensile steel Desert Master with 170mm (7in) main bearers and 200mm (8in) A-frame, zinc coated, sand blasted and then powder coated. It is rated to 4T. The chassis is huck riveted, so there's no welding in any of the structural components. There are circular dimple pressed holes throughout the chassis which save weight and increase strength. Suspension is Esy-Tow wishbone with adjustable dual airbags and dual shock absorbers.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE A front storage locker big enough for surfboards and other toys; Striking looks; The slide-out kitchen

There's no checkerplate on the exterior – also a weight saver – instead On The Move Caravans has opted for raptor coating in its place.

The CMS plug-and-play electrical system is made here, sent to China for installation and then quality tested and signed off in Australia.

SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING

The Grenade 6.3 Black Edition is an offroad van. As the name suggests, it is completely black, and while this is a distinctive look I wondered about its suitability in the harsh Australian sun at the height of summer. However, On The Move Caravans assured us that its insulation properties mean that it does not get hot inside under such conditions nor will the panels delaminate because of high tech foam and glue used that have a heat resistance up to 160°C

It has a toolbox up front with a slide-out for barbecue on one side and gas bottles on the other. Behind the toolbox are the two spares with nifty ramps to hold them in place and make getting them off the van easy. There's also good external lighting, a slide-out kitchen and external shower to avoid tracking sand and dirt inside.

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SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING ★

“Its insulation properties mean that it does not get hot inside nor will the *panels delaminate because of a different foam and glue used that have a heat resistance up to 160°C*”

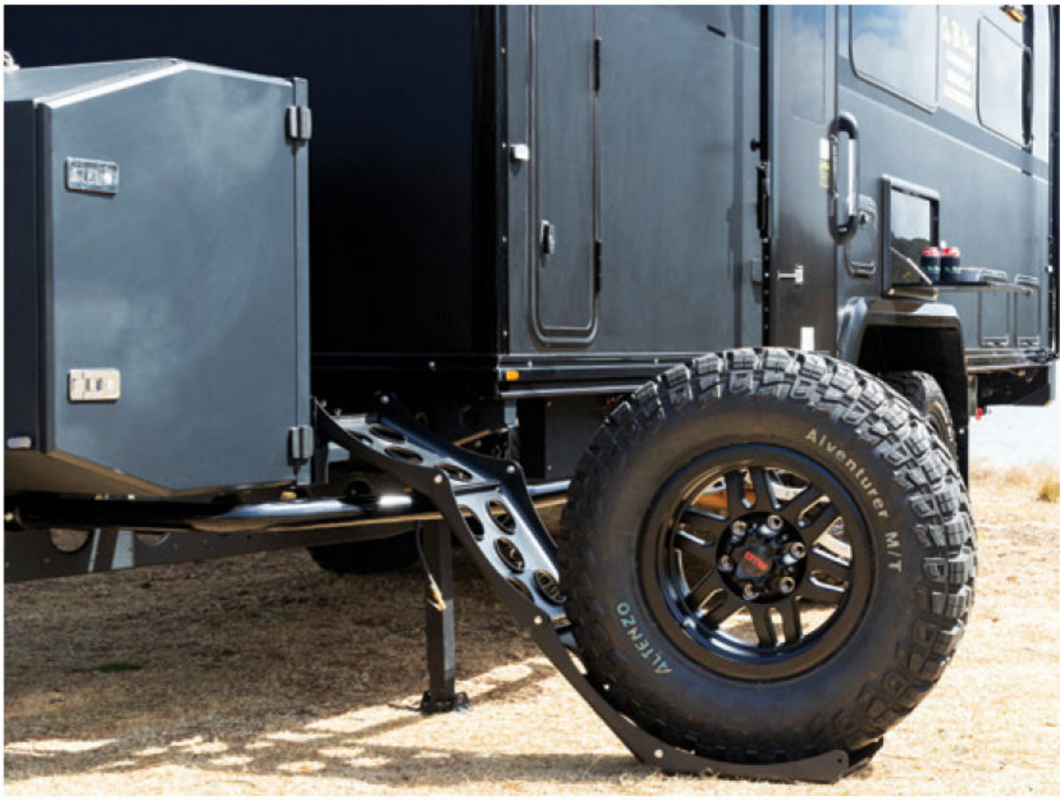
Some features many will like are the great storage, locker tall enough for a couple of bikes with the handlebars turned or even surfboards and the two innovative extra storage drawers built into the back bumper, each of which can hold 20kg.

It is a couples van with a terrific internal layout borrowed from motorhomes where you have a massive rear club lounge during the day and a bed which electrically lowers from the ceiling at night. This lifting bed is great use of the available space. A full ensuite and a well-appointed kitchen give you all the conveniences you need while travelling.

TOWABILITY

The Grenade 6.3 Black Edition has a tare of 2866kg and an ATM of 3500kg which means it would be okay to tow behind most dual cab 4x4 utes.

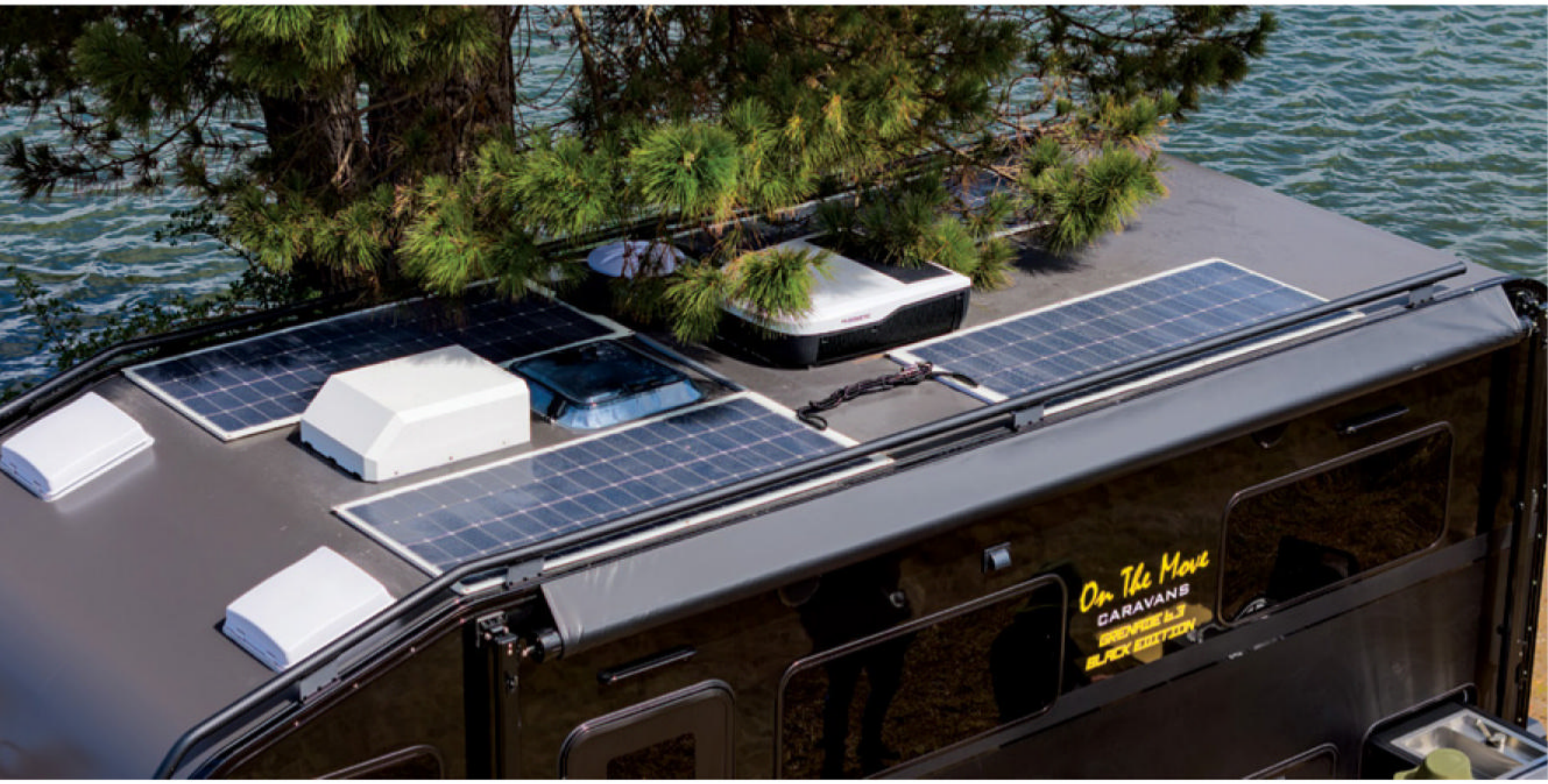
However, it can be rated to 4000kg in which case it would need a bigger tow tug, like the RAM 1500 we used during the COTY tow test. It was a pretty easy task for the big US truck over our Warrnambool testing course comprising of highway, sealed country roads and some gravel, and the Grenade 6.3 passed with flying colours.



ABOVE AND BELOW The Grenade 6.3 Black Edition can be rated to 4T in which case it would need a bigger tow vehicle; The nifty ramp to get the spare tyres out is a nice touch

LIVEABILITY ★

"Instead of a fixed bed it has a drop-down bed *that's more often seen in motorhomes*"



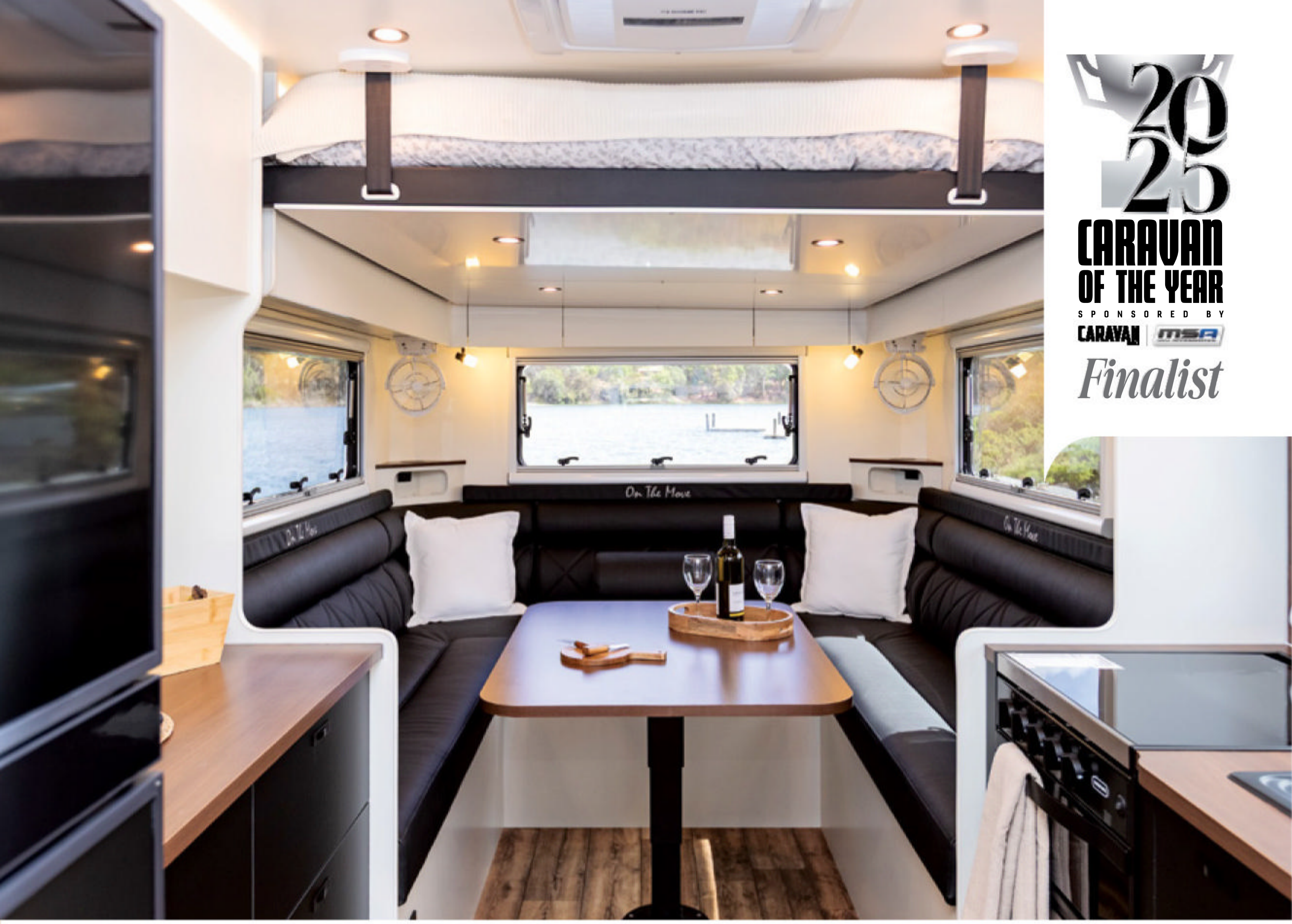
MALCOLM STREET
▸ **FIELD EDITOR**

SELF-SUFFICIENCY
The Grenade 6.3 Black Edition is well equipped for staying off-grid. The 460L freshwater capacity is a cut above the average (usually around 190L), although when full, that detracts from the 634kg payload. The grey water tank is a handy 100L. The Dometic cassette toilet is the usual limitation in any self-sufficiency capability. On The Move Caravans has recently started to use electricals from US-based Renogy. There's a pair of 200Ah Renogy Pro lithium LiFePO4 batteries, four 200W solar panels and a 3000W inverter charger with a 150A battery charger. Those numbers mean the 12V system is well capable of running the 240V air-conditioner and the microwave oven through the inverter. The hob and grill are an LP gas system, as is the instantaneous water heater.

ABOVE AND BELOW 800W of solar on the roof; Renogy electrical system

LIVEABILITY
The Grenade 6.3 Black Edition layout is a little different from the standard arrangement. As mentioned earlier, instead of a fixed bed it has a drop-down bed that's more often seen in motorhomes. But unlike motorhomes, the bed is in the north-south orientation more popular for caravanners, which means that the lounge below is larger than usual – no complaints here. The rest of the layout consists of a mid-area kitchen and a spacious full-width front bathroom.

While not everyone appreciates a drop-down bed, it does have space-saving advantages and, in this case, the bonus of the north-south bed. Additionally, there are overhead lockers around the top edges, a feature not always available with a drop-down bed. Some drop-down bed setups have no lights above the bed, but this ticks all the boxes with strip lights above the overhead lockers, ceiling lights and reading lights!



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ABOVE AND BELOW The bed drops down over the huge rear club lounge, maximising the space; Spacious bathroom up front

One other benefit of the bed's design is that none of the lounge's side cushions have to be moved – only the table has to be lowered. The bed lowering straps are obtrusive but that's a small price to pay for the convenience of both occupants being able to get in and out of bed easily. I'm always a fan of a club lounge; this one has more than enough room for sitting back and relaxing. The corner shelves with the charger points are a nice touch and the only caution for taller persons is the ceiling height might be a bit low under the raised bed.

The full-width bathroom has a good feeling of space even as the roof slopes as it follows the front roofline of the van. Slightly unconventionally, the front-loading washing machine is under the vanity basin, resulting in a multi-shelf cupboard in the space where the washing machine usually is.

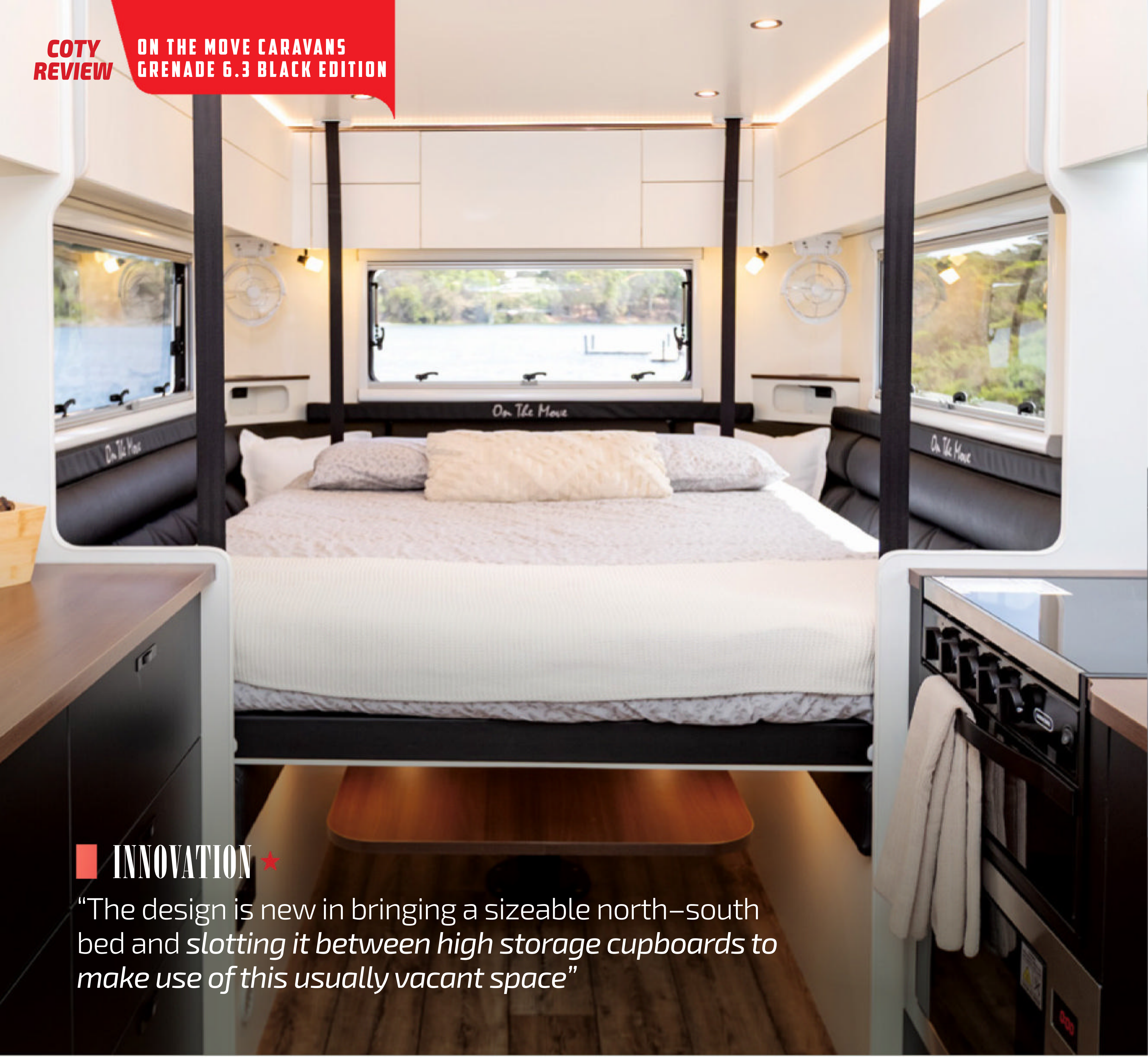
The kitchen is a fairly standard setup with a four-burner hob and grill, a 188L compressor fridge and a microwave oven. The only change from the usual setup is the microwave located under the grill, rather than the more conventional overhead locker position. An On The Move Caravans feature is the removable screen attached to the fridge cabinet that links to the four-position rearview camera.

Outside the Grenade 6.3 Black Edition, there are several features of note. The external slide-out kitchen is fully equipped with a three-burner hob and stainless-steel sink. There's the front storage box and spare wheel carrier with its fold-out wheel ramp that makes getting the wheels in and out easy. Then there's the extra storage built into the front wall which is much taller than conventional tunnel storage,and here you can store anything from your bike to snow skis. It's a touch that fits neatly into the Grenade 6.3 Black Edition's body profile.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Considering the value for money criteria on the Grenade 6.3 Black Edition required some consideration. Not because the van isn't well equipped, just the opposite. Some of the van features are almost unique, like the I-beam chassis that's dimple pressed and huck rivetted for strength and weight saving. Or the dovetail panel joints used in the bodywork, which give a very accurate fit and high strength. The van might be Chinese built but there's a considerable amount of Australian design time and engineering. Features like the rear club lounge and drop-down bed, which give flexibility to layout use, are often found in more expensive caravans, as are external and internal kitchens.

The Grenade 6.3 Black Edition comes with a considerable number of options automatically included, all of which are accounted for in the $124,990 price tag. It's good value for some inclusions that are very nice to have, including the black wall colouring that gives this van its distinctive look.



INNOVATION ★

"The design is new in bringing a sizeable north–south bed and *slotting it between high storage cupboards to make use of this usually vacant space*"

ABOVE The bed in nighttime mode

JOHN FORD
▸ **EDITOR**

EASE OF USE

Making things easier for owners starts with an electric step at the entrance and continues with thoughtful features for a carefree life on the road. The main feature of the Grenade 6.3 is the drop-down bed that adds much more usable space. It has a handy switch for the electric motors that requires a double touch to minimise accidental activation. Not needing to remove the lounge cushions to lower the bed is a nice design feature to keep life simple.

Sitting at 6.3m (20ft 7in) long, the Grenade 6.3 Black Edition is a reasonably large van that offers a generous amount of usable space while achieving a 3500kg ATM for easier towing with a wide range of vehicles. I like the four-way camera for its comprehensive view of the surroundings, which aids in driving through traffic, manoeuvring down narrow paths or parking in tight spots.

Outside features that contribute to the van's ease of use include a slide-out kitchen, excellent storage options at the rear bar and the ramps to roll out the spare tyres if you need to change one out on the road.

Controls for the airbag suspension are now located in a more accessible spot on the chassis near the step, and while some owners may baulk at having to adjust for variations on payload, the wishbone system delivers a smooth ride over a wide mix of road surfaces.

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INNOVATION

The On The Move Caravans team brought their combined years of experience in building vans in Australia to the construction of the body and the advanced engineering of the Desert Master chassis. The modular design of the chassis and the drop-in suspension cradles allow for optimum weight distribution across various van lengths and designs. Much of the build now employs computer control and robotic construction for fine tolerances and consistent strength. The specially designed composite wall construction is lightweight, robust and weather-resistant.

While this isn't the first drop-down bed in a caravan, the design is new in bringing a sizeable north-south bed and slotting it between high storage cupboards to make use of this usually vacant space. And you have to love the storage drawer on the rear bar that uses the gap between the chassis rails – that's clever.

Another innovative design choice was that On The Move Caravans used special composite technology to allow the use of the signature black panels without delamination under hot conditions.

ABOVE AND BELOW The kitchen layout is good with the microwave underneath the grill; Bench and drawer storage opposite the kitchen

RIGHT Towing the Grenade 6.3 Black Edition was easy for the RAM

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ON THE MOVE CARAVANS GRENADE 6.3 BLACK EDITION

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES
Overall length 8.32m (27ft 3in)
Body length 6.3m (20ft 7in)
Width 2.43m (7ft 10in)
Height 3.16m (10ft 4in)
Tare 2866kg
ATM 3500kg (upgrade to 4000kg available)
Payload 634kg (calculated)
Ball weight at tare 198kg
Ball to tare ratio 6.9% (calculated)

EXTERNAL
Frame Frameless
Cladding Full composite one-piece walls (30mm), one-piece roof (55mm) from A-frame to rear bumper and honeycomb floor (40mm)
Chassis Desert Master automotive high tensile steel
Suspension Esy-Tow wishbone with dual airbags and shock absorbers
Coupling Cruisemaster DO35
Brakes 12in electric
Wheels 16 alloy rims and 265/75/R16 MT tyres
Water 460L freshwater, 1 x 100L grey water
Battery 2 x 200Ah Renogy Pro lithium LiFePO4
Inverter 3000W Renogy
Solar 4 x 200W Renogy panels
Air-conditioner Dometic Harrier Lite
Gas 2 x 4.5kg
Sway control N/A
Cooking Slide-out kitchen with three-burner hob and stainless-steel sink

INTERNAL
Cooking Four-burner gas stovetop with grill
Microwave 34L convection
Fridge 188L Dometic compressor
Bathroom Full-width ensuite with Dometic cassette toilet and separate shower
Washing machine 2.5kg wall-mounted front loader
Hot water Arana instantaneous

PRICE FROM $124,990

BLACK SERIES OPTIONS FITTED:
- 2 x 12V fans
- 12V dust reduction system
- Diesel heater
- External slide-out kitchen
- Extra 100L freshwater tank
- Inbuilt air compressor with tank
- External TV box
- Front bar spot lights
- Double electric step
- Upgrade to 3000W inverter (150A built-in charger)
- Upgrade to 800W solar panels
- Extra 200Ah lithium battery and battery box
- Solar awning
- Four-way camera and screen

PRICE AS SHOWN $124,990

MORE INFORMATION
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Yatala Qld 4207
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E: marketing@onthemovecaravans.com.au
W: onthemovecaravans.com.au

CUSTOMER CARE

On The Move Caravans' warranty covers five years on the chassis and suspension and three years on the construction, which includes the body, furniture and ancillary equipment. This is in line with customer expectations and is a realistic cover for owners. Circumstances where a warranty doesn't apply include overloading, driving on inappropriate roads, driving too fast for the conditions and driving on non-gazetted roads. Owners are expected to adhere to service intervals at 1000km and then every 5000km. The warranty is not transferrable to a new owner.

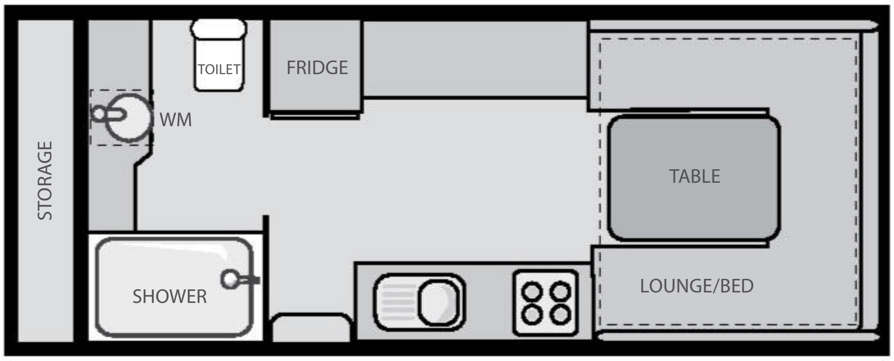
Like many manufacturers, the relevant supplier covers appliances like refrigerators, stoves, air-conditioners and so on. The warranty document is comprehensive and partly complies with the statutory wording required by Australian Consumer Law.

X-FACTOR

Customer demand for dark-coloured vans is driven by the public's slavish following of influencers who have determined that black is cool. On The Move Caravans met the challenge by engineering composite cladding that is durable under the Australian sun. So, the Black Edition meets the fashion challenge head-on and stands out as the renegade black sheep among the flock of light-coloured vans on the road.

Matching the macho livery are oversized toolboxes, prominent brush bars, purposeful-looking punched chassis rails and the bright yellow oversized tubes of the suspension. Rounding out the list are the front spotlights powerful enough for a nighttime game of footy on a remote salt pan.

Inside is the drop-down bed that will amaze the unknowing and a sizable ensuite that is worth bragging rights.



On The Move
CARAVANS

QUALITY BUILD

UNIQUE DESIGN

AUSTRALIAN OWNED

On The Move Caravans is an Australian owned and operated boutique family business, that started building caravans in Campbellfield in 2007. By remaining a boutique manufacturer, we give every caravan we build the attention to detail that it deserves.

onthemovecaravans.com.au

SCAN TO PLAY VIDEO
PRIME EDGE CARAVANS

SMALL VAN, BIG ADVENTURES

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★ ★ ★

Great looks, quality engineering, contemporary style — the Prime Edge Warrior Off-Road 19'6 Bunk is a quality family van that will turn heads wherever it goes.

Words COTY judges Pics and video Josh Hanger, Josh Robinson, Ted Airey, Graham Neander

Few would argue that the Prime Edge Warrior Off-Road 19'6 was one of the best-looking vans at this year's Caravan of the Year event. The sandy colour palette celebrated the tough edge of early LandCruisers, but everything about the van reflected the best of contemporary engineering and style.

MALCOLM STREET
▸ **FIELD EDITOR**

BUILD QUALITY

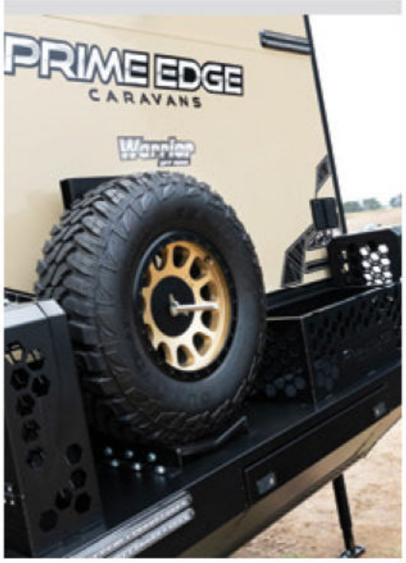
Starting inside, the Prime Edge Warrior Off-Road 19'6 is a very well put together caravan. Given that the owners of the Prime Edge Caravans brand started making benchtops and cabinetry before moving to constructing caravans, it is not surprising that the van interior looks very well put together. All the cabinetry is CNC cut and interlocked to ensure strength and light weight. Laminated post-form benchtops and the fibreglass-lined interior walls are designed to be hard wearing. All the cupboard doors and drawers open and close smoothly. Soft closing is a feature, and the latches operate positively. Using wall coverings that match the seat upholstery is a visual touch that works well.

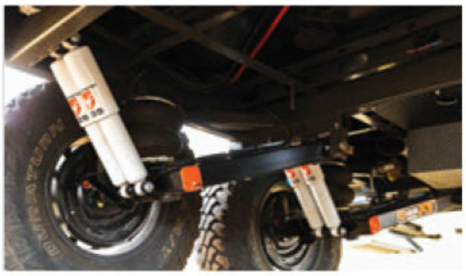
Around the outside, the dusty gold/sand-coloured exterior colour is attractive, as is the lower waistline of X-Plate. Together with the very stylish-looking drawbar storage and practical rear bar, these give the van a very purposeful look.

Prime Edge is very keen to point out that it uses a Henrob riveted aluminium body frame for all its caravans, including the Warrior. Like any good manufacturer, Prime Edge used grommets on all the cable runs. The wall cladding is PROBOND aluminium composite, and a fibreglass panel is used with XPS insulation for the roof. The body is mounted on a SupaGal chassis with 100mm (4in) main rails, a 50mm (2in) raiser and 150mm (6in) RHS for the drawbar. An effort has been made to lighten the chassis by using dimple press cross members.

TOWABILITY ★

"Its ATM of 3500kg and 2829kg tare weight *put it in Toyota LandCruiser towing territory*"





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Practical storage on the rear bar; A good-looking van; Cruisemaster XT independent suspension

RIGHT Bunks are at the rear, opposite the bathroom

2025
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SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING

Prime Edge's Warrior is a family van with a front east-west bed and a rear area with bunks and a bathroom. Like many family vans, the sleeping accommodation is good, but the dining area is not really large enough for a family to sit around, especially if there are teenagers along.

For some, a longer van would result in a roomier layout, but the shorter body length's advantage on offroad tracks has some appeal. To handle those same offroad tracks, the van is fitted with Cruisemaster XT independent suspension, which comes with airbags and dual shock absorbers per wheel.

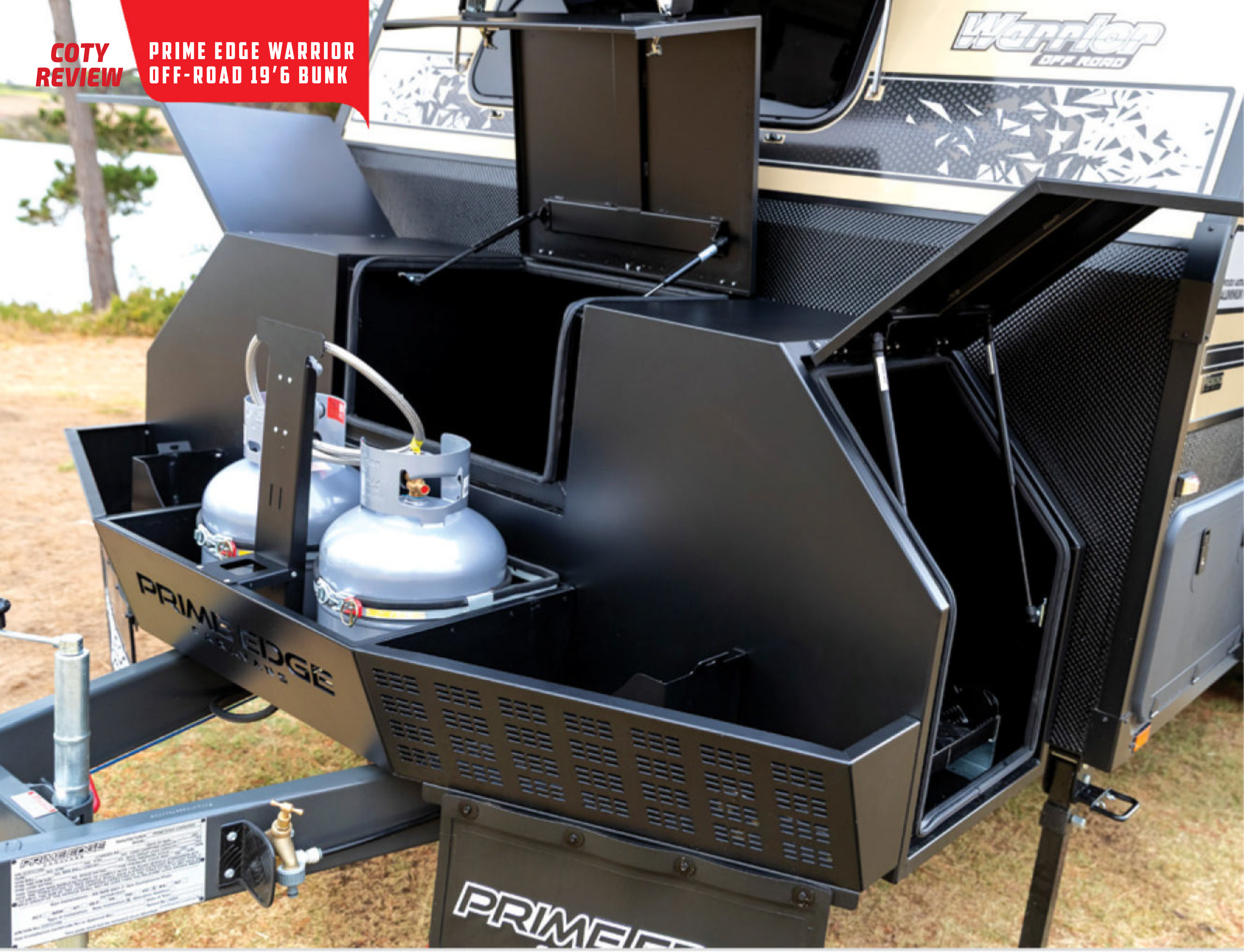
A look under the van reveals that Prime Edge likes to do a neat job with all the cabling and pipework. Corrugated PVC is used to protect all the piping and cabling under the van, and the use of X-Plate for protective sheeting is an interesting touch. Grey water tank drain piping is often located behind the offside rear wheel, making it vulnerable to road damage, but the battery box in the same location does a nice job of protecting the PVC pipe.

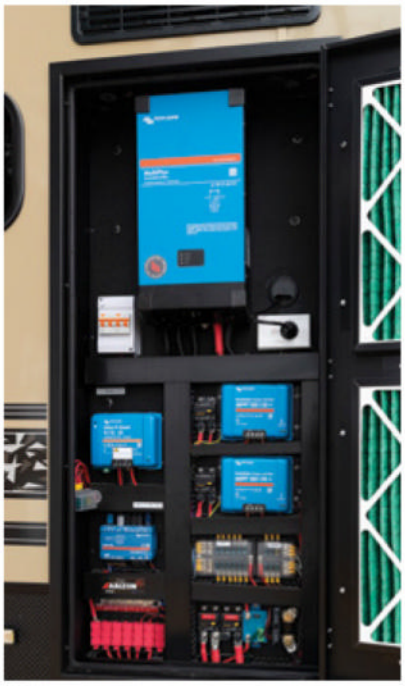
There's a very generous area of external storage which is ideal for those planning long-term travel. The gull wing storage boxes on the drawbar are generously sized. There's a standard tunnel boot and extra storage bins on both sides. At the rear, the purpose-built wheel carrier/jerry can holder/firewood box adds an extra dimension.

There's certainly plenty of lithium LiFePO4 battery and solar panel capacity for off-grid living. While the water tank capacity is OK, the cassette toilet, particularly for a family, is going to be limiting. But more on all this later.

TOWABILITY

For a 19ft 6in (5.95m) caravan, the Warrior isn't excessively heavy for an offroad van. Its ATM of 3500kg and 2829kg tare weight put it in Toyota LandCruiser towing territory. Our tow vehicle was a dual-cab Ford F-150 Super Duty Lariat. The tow vehicle was a bit bouncy, in typical US style, but the van handled well. I was particularly interested to see how the van towed on the dirt road section of our test circuit, but apart from a little bit of bouncing around, there were no particular issues – the Cruisemaster XT airbag suspension gave a smooth and stable ride.





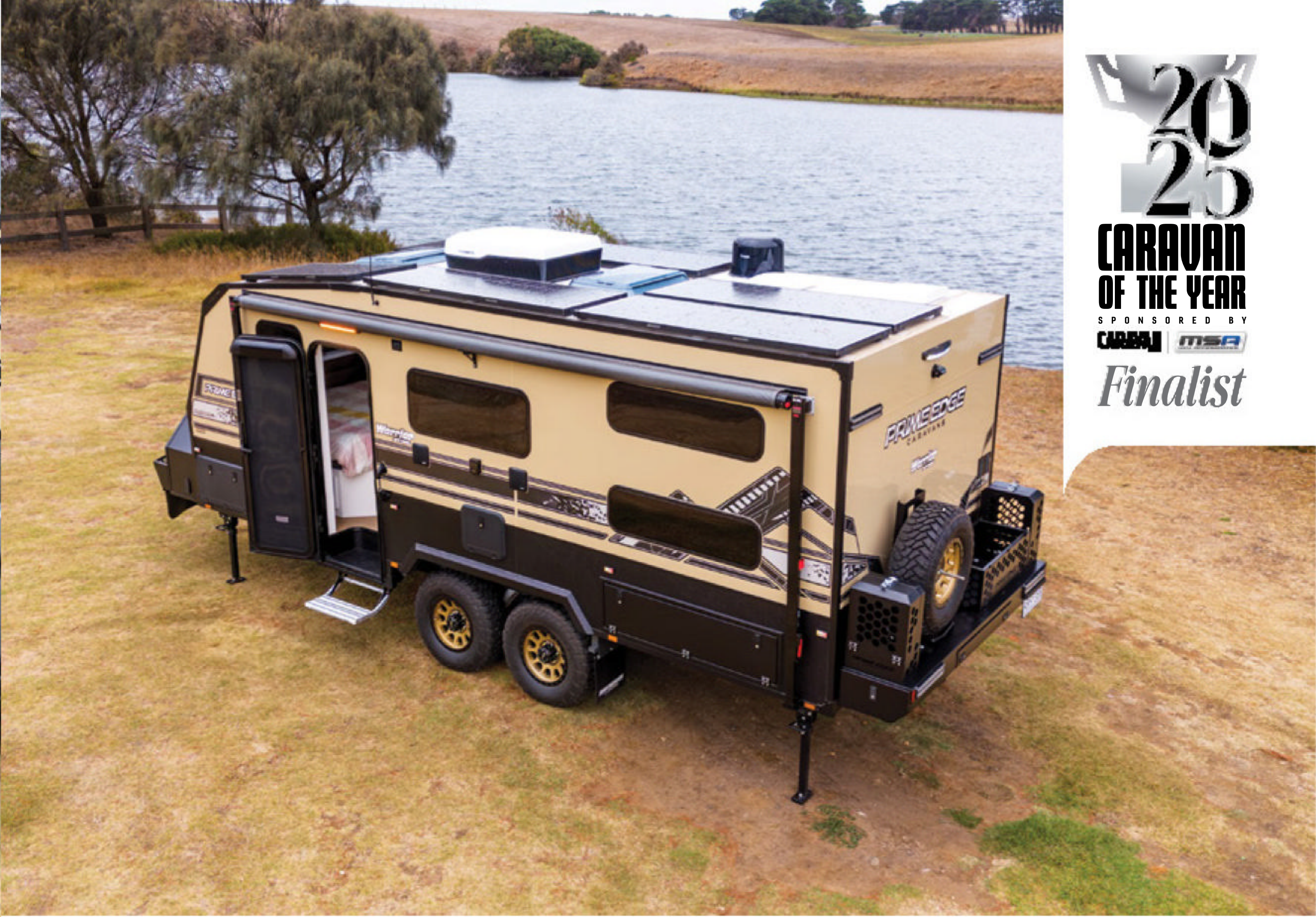
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Victron electronics neatly tucked away in an external panel; Washing machine at rear; Great storage on the front bar

JOHN FORD
EDITOR

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

All vans feature a delicate balance of packing as much equipment as possible and saving on weight, especially family vans. The Warrior Off-Road 19'6 has a sensible tare weight of 2829kg and a payload of 671kg. While that might seem generous, you must consider the water supply, as every extra litre adds an extra kilogram to the payload. So, the family will need to be frugal with showers because two 95L water tanks will be the limiting factor for off-grid camping away from a swimming hole or beach. There is a single 95L grey water tank which will expand your campground options.

There should be no worries about power, though, because 1320W of solar on the roof supplies 800Ah of lithium batteries. The installation from Arizon is beautifully executed, with the Victron electronics



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ABOVE Heaps of solar panels on the roof

SELF-SUFFICIENCY ★

> *"There should be no worries about power, though,* because 1320W of solar on the roof supplies 800Ah of lithium batteries"

accessible in a dust-proof panel on the driver's side of the van. Twin 100A MPPT chargers will quickly top up the batteries from the solar and there's a 30A DC to DC charger for backup power from the tow vehicle.

A 2000W inverter/charger will run most appliances, including an air-conditioner, and charge the batteries using mains power.

Two 9kg gas bottles extend the off-grid capability and should last several weeks for cooking and heating.

LIVEABILITY

Not everyone wants an oversized van towed by a big American truck, so I like that Prime Edge brought this 19ft 6in family van. Its sensible size and weight mean many mid-range vehicles can tow it legally and safely. Despite the modest size, Prime Edge has packed a lot into the traditional layout and has made every opportunity for storage space inside and out. A big part of the liveability is the well-finished furniture, subtle colour choices and attention to detail in the choice of hardware and plumbing accessories. It adds up to an enduring and welcoming interior space.

The main east-west bed is positioned near the front entry, with a narrow walkway at the foot of the bed providing easy access, so you won't have to climb over your partner in the middle of the night. It's hard to overstate the importance of this design feature for east-west beds, and I find it puzzling that more builders don't include it.

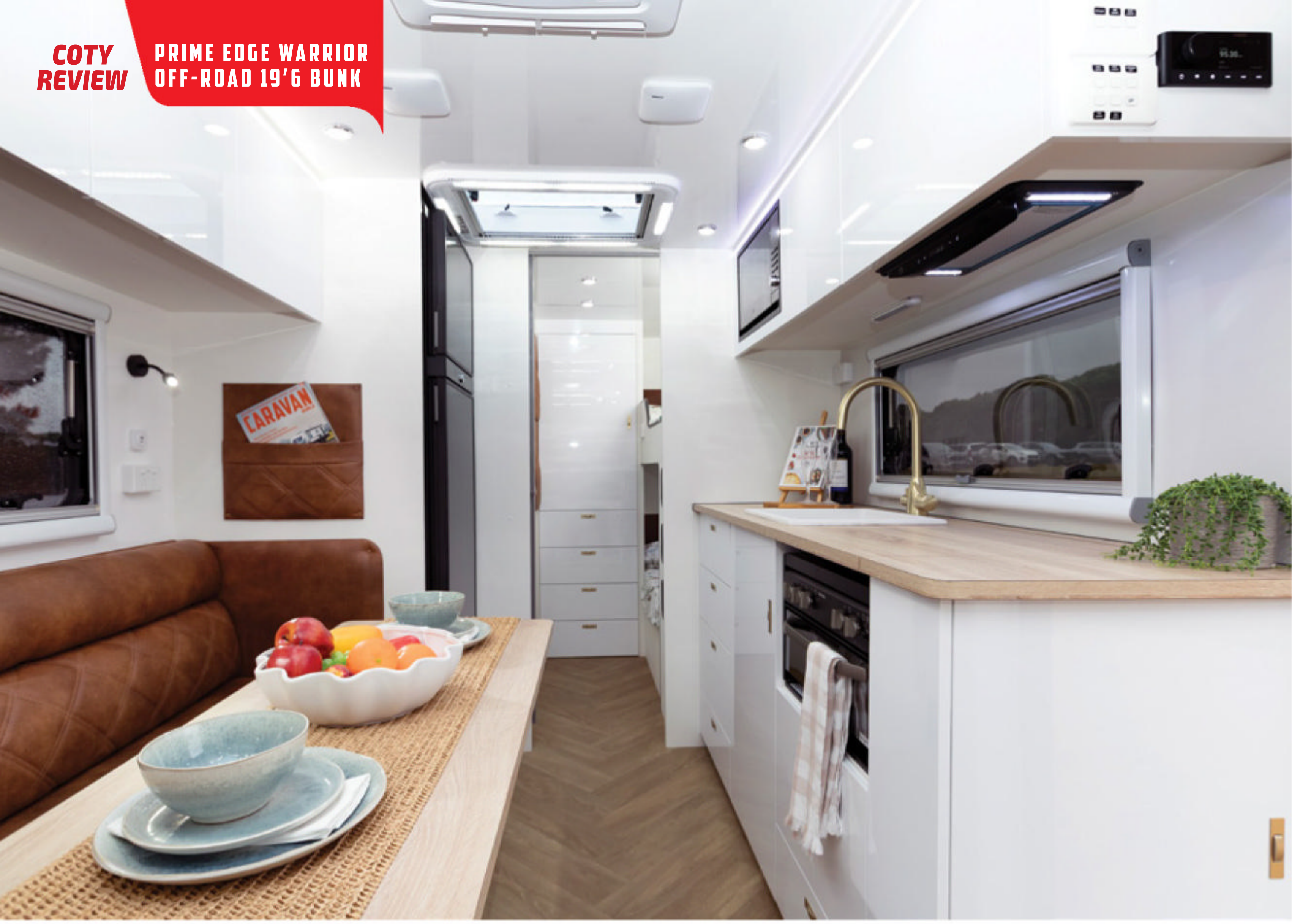
The bunks are located at the back next to the ensuite, which features a separate shower and toilet with plenty of space, ventilation and light. There's also an external shower for a quick hose down after a dusty or salty day. Each bunk is equipped with individual lights, power chargers, a power point and a fan, and they all have a window to enjoy the view.

A compact kitchen includes a stove and a microwave on the passenger side, a 224L family-friendly Dometic compressor fridge and a bench-style dinette opposite. It can accommodate three people, but an extra guest can sit on the main bed and cosy up to the table.

VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Edge brand has long impressed me with its quality engineering, inspired design, high work ethic and attention to detail, so the Warrior at this year's COTY scored highly for me. It has quality off-grid power, an alloy frame construction and name-brand appliances.

At $140,000, the Warrior Off-Road 19'6 represents standout value.



INNOVATION ★

“Fitting a queen bed, double bunks, generous kitchen, full bathroom *and comfortable dining area in a 19ft 6in van is no mean feat*”

ALLISON WATT
▸ **DEPUTY EDITOR**

ABO VE AND BELOW Plenty of storage in the kitchen; Practical and stylish

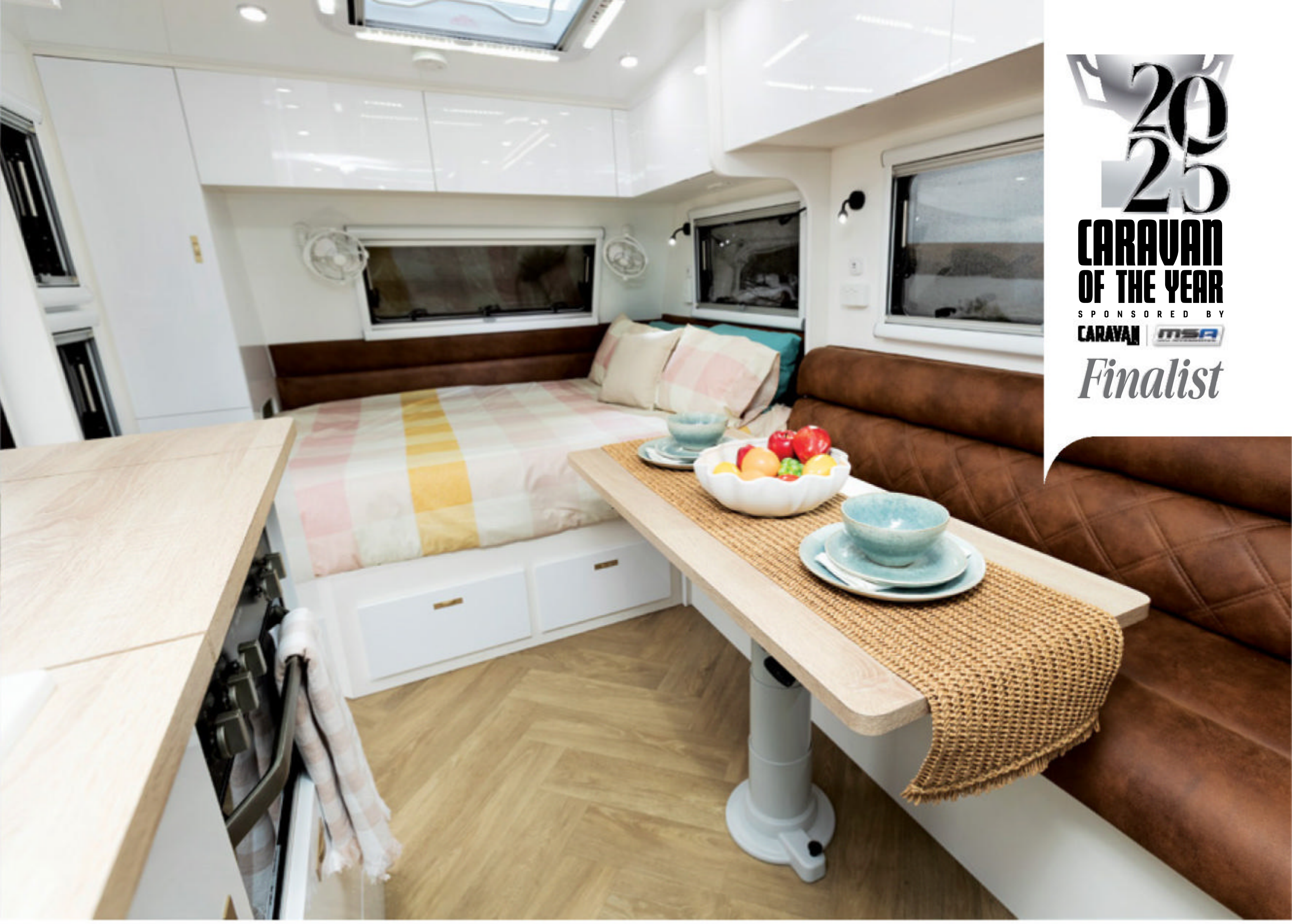
EASE OF USE

When it comes to travelling with kids, full-height caravans have a huge advantage over camper trailers, hybrids, pop-tops and the like. After you've been travelling all day and you pull into camp, the last thing you want to do is spend time setting up beds so you can put tired kids to sleep.

Which is why families will appreciate the Prime Edge Warrior Off-Road 19'6 Bunk version. This van has everything a family will need in a relatively compact 19ft 6in, Australian-built package that you can take anywhere.

The Cruisemaster XT Level 4 airbag suspension makes levelling up when you arrive at camp as easy as pushing a button. There's plenty of external storage boots and lockers for all the toys, slide-outs for the external fridge and barbecue and the external shower has instant hot water to wash off the kids before they go inside. All the electrics are easy to access in the external panel, meaning you don't have to move or lift furniture inside to access fuses and such.

The entry door is at the front by the main bed, with the kitchen and dining located centrally. The kids' bunks (double) are down the back, adjacent to the bathroom with shower, vanity and cassette toilet. There's also a front loader washing machine. And there's plenty of bug lights, USB points, Sirocco fans, a smart TV, entertainment system and all the other standard items which make life on the road just that bit easier.



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INNOVATION

Fitting a queen bed, double bunks, generous kitchen, full bathroom and comfortable dining area in a 19ft 6in van is no mean feat, but Prime Edge owners (and brothers) Vlad and Nick Suplinovski have achieved it with the Warrior Off-Road 19'6. While many family vans are big – simply because of what's required for a family spending time on the road – the Warrior Off-Road 19'6 is a neat package. It will fit into most sites at a caravan park, and it will go down bush tracks where others might not.

Vlad came along to COTY to show off the Warrior and takes real pride in his product. The team uses the best Australian-made materials and appliances where they can and has great attention to detail. Prime Edge is proudly a boutique builder – opting for quality over quantity and Vlad has complete confidence in his product.

Before his clients even get to look at plans and layouts, he spends a lot of time with them to ascertain their needs. Where do they intend to go camping? What vehicle will they tow it with? These conversations happen long before layouts are drafted so Vlad can meet the individual needs of every customer.

ABOVE AND BELOW The east-west bed configuration makes for a more spacious living area in this family van; Good-sized bathroom for a family

ABOVE AND RIGHT
The gap at the end of the east-west bed makes it easy to get in and out; Not overly heavy to tow

PRIME EDGE WARRIOR OFF-ROAD 19'6 BUNK

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Overall length 8.4m (27ft 6in)
Body length 5.95m (19ft 6in)
Width 2.3m (7ft 5in)
Travel height 3.05m (10ft)
Tare 2829kg
ATM 3500kg
Payload 671kg (calculated)
Ball weight at tare 144kg
Ball to tare ratio 5.1% (calculated)

EXTERNAL

Frame 400mm A-frame extension
Cladding PROBOND aluminium composite panel
Chassis SupaGal with 2in raiser, 4in chassis
Suspension 3.7T Cruisemaster XT Level 4 independent airbag with dual shock absorbers
Coupling Cruisemaster DO35
Brakes 12in drum
Wheels MPC MT 265/75R16 tyres
Water 2 x 95L freshwater, 1 x 95L grey water
Battery 2 x 400Ah iTechworld lithium
Inverter 2000W Victron
Solar 4 x 250W, 2 x 160W (1320W total)
Air-conditioner Dometic FreshJet
Gas 2 x 9kg
Sway control Tuson sway control
Cooking Barbecue
Fridge Slide-out

INTERNAL

Cooking Cooktop/mini grill
Microwave NCE 24L
Fridge Dometic 224L compressor
Bathroom Cassette toilet and separate shower
Washing machine Front load
Hot water Girard instant gas

PRICE FROM $122,650

OPTIONS FITTED

- Cruisemaster XT Level 4 airbag suspension
- Custom toolbox
- Premium with spare tyre and wood box bumper bar

PRICE AS SHOWN $140,000

MORE INFORMATION

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CUSTOMER CARE

Prime Edge offers a five-year structural warranty on its vans which includes any structural components that are manufactured by Prime Edge Caravans, such as an aluminium stud wall. There's also a five-year complete warranty on the electrical system.

A two-year general warranty applies to furniture such as cupboards and cupboard doors, drawers and benchtops. Supplied parts and appliances such as cooking, the toilet, fridge, hot water system, stereo and the like are covered by the warranties of those suppliers and there are contact phone numbers for all these provided by Prime Edge in its warranty documents for new owners.

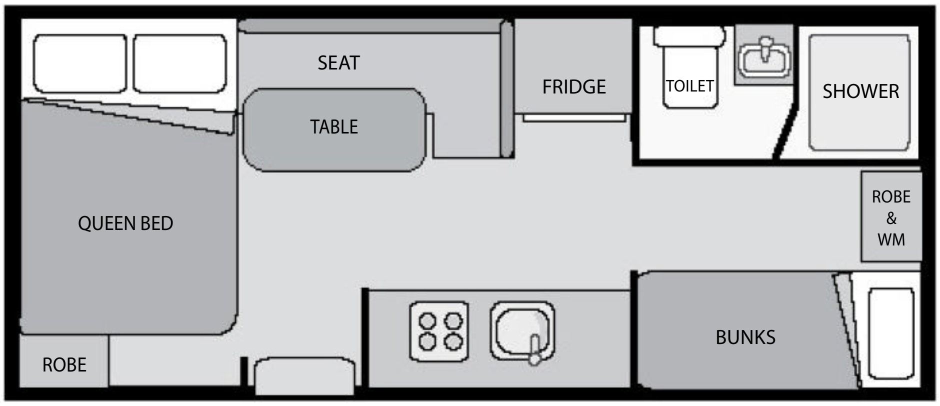
Should anything go wrong, the first point of contact is the dealership from which the van was purchased and there are six dealers around Australia in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia.

X-FACTOR

The Prime Edge Warrior Off-Road 19'6 is a quality Australian-made van and owners Vlad and Nick use the best quality appliances as standard, not optional upgrades. When you buy a van from Prime Edge, you are dealing directly with an owner who takes absolute pride in his product – not a middleman.

The Warrior Off-Road 19'6 really looks the part – from its sand-coloured external composite body, black edging and checkerplate to the custom front toolbox with a place for the gas bottles, firewood and slide outs. The rear bumper also stands out: it's a compartment for poles or fishing rods, jerry cans, more firewood and the spare wheel.

Not only does it look great – it's comfortable and has all the mod cons you'll need to travel Australia. No matter where you take it, you'll turn heads.



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* * *

For couples who like room to move, the new SRC-24 from Snowy River Caravans has a lot to offer.

Words COTY judges Pics and video Josh Hanger, Josh Robinson, Ted Airey, Graham Neander

Snowy River Caravans has undoubtedly established a reputation for itself in Australia. Since 2015, when the manufacturer first began building its locally designed caravans in China, the company has steadily improved its product and increased the range of models available. The SRC-24 is a typical example of one of the latest vans from the Melbourne-based brand.

SCAN TO PLAY VIDEO

DOUBLE THE COMFORT

SNOWY RIVER
CARAVANS
SRC-TWENTY FOUR
SNOWY RIVER
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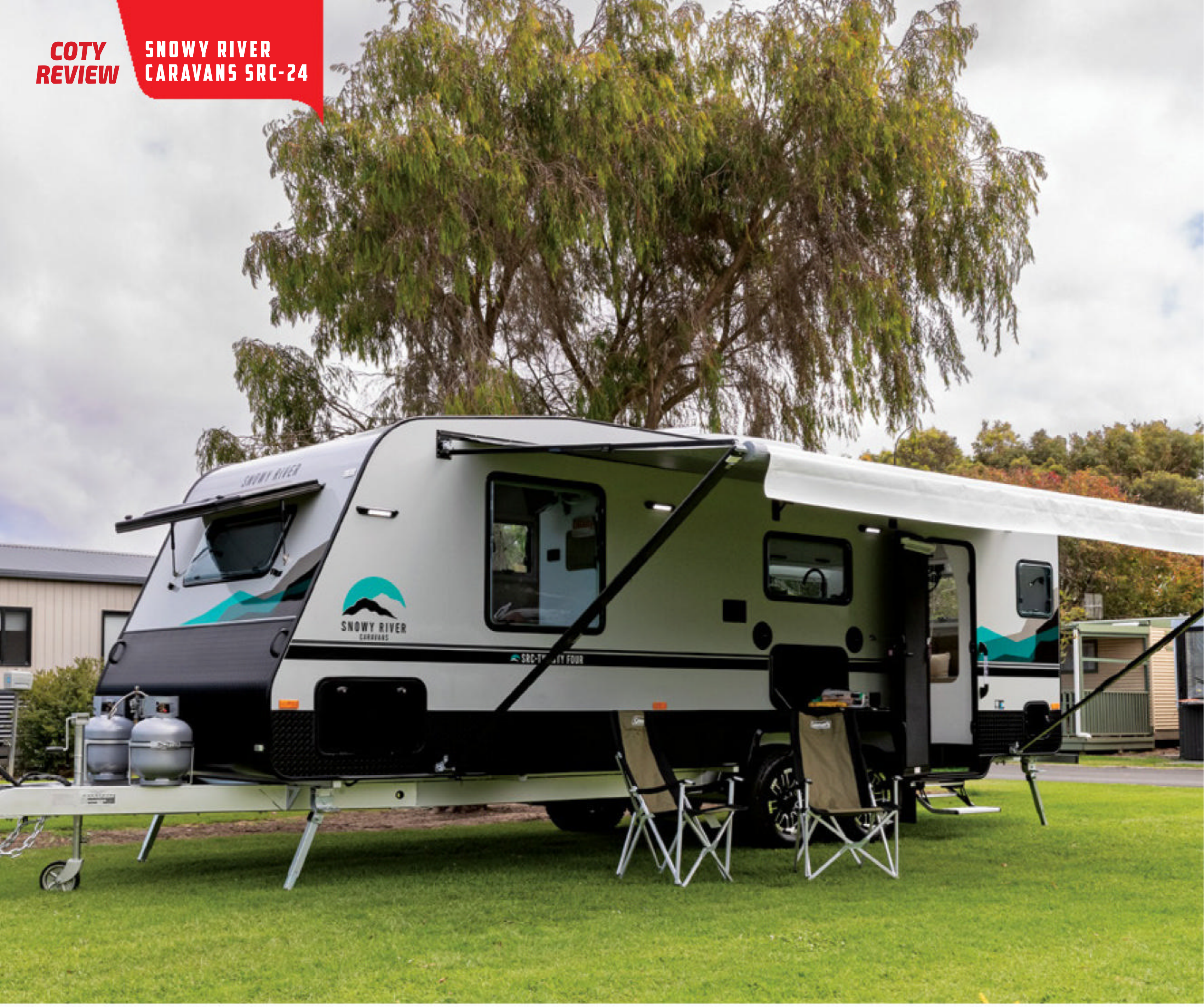
SRC 24



JOHN FORD

EDITOR

BUILD QUALITY

When the Snowy River brand hit the Australian market a decade ago, it was the result of a two-year development inspired by the experience of the local Regent Caravans brand. However, the offshore build (designed and engineered in Australia to handle our tough conditions) brought the benefits of costly Chinese technology to the construction process, which isn't available locally. For example, the robot-welded DuraGal chassis ensures repeatable engineering to close tolerances. So, too, the composite panels, embedded with an internal aluminium frame, are formed in an automated heat and pressure process to endure and not delaminate. The suspension on the SRC-24 is a 3.5T AL-KO rubber torsion system that's simple and robust enough, when driven to the conditions, for limited travel on outback roads. The lower shroud of checkerplate on the sides of the van hints at suitability for gravel roads. The model Snowy brought to COTY 2025 came with an optional 50mm chassis riser for added offroad strength. Most underpinnings are well protected, but I'd like to see the outlet for the optional grey water tank moved or filled with a guard because it looks vulnerable to stone damage.

SNOWY RIVER
CARAVANS

ABOVE AND BELOW Built for primarily on-road driving but it will go down some dirt roads; Tunnel boot storage

The van body arrives at the Melbourne factory in a container, so they are marginally narrower than locally built vans. However, I defy that you can see the difference inside. The local team completes the fitout, including the gas and electrical components, and these look professional and have proper certification. And all assembly, quality control and finishing touches happen in Snowy River's Melbourne factory.

The furniture is hand-built from lightweight ply and looks well finished and durable, but it might be time to update the marble finish of the benchtops and trim.

SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING

Although Snowy River Caravans nominates the SRC range as semi-offroad, they are essentially bitumen tourers that will cope with limited dirt road travel. The 24-footer is longer than usual, extending the liveability for couples. A rear club lounge adds significantly to style and comfort on board. The rear door/front bed is the most popular layout, and the central bathroom adds even more privacy and creates two separate living spaces. Couples can get some alone time, which can be important on long trips, and it allows those with different sleeping times space to do their own thing.

In standard trim, the SRC-24 is more suited for a caravan park or weekend use, but the van brought to COTY was equipped with a range of extras that made it better for extended travel. These extras include a 274L fridge instead of the 174L version, as well as sufficient solar and battery power to operate the inverter for the likes of an air fryer and the air-conditioner for short periods. The optional grey water tank also enhanced its suitability for national parks and RV camping areas.

TOWABILITY

We towed the Snowy SRC-24 with a Ford Ranger over a mix of highway and rural roads, including dirt tracks through Allansford farmland just a short drive from Warrnambool, Vic, and it was one of the most pleasant rides of our event. The Ranger's 3L V6 engine produces an impressive 600Nm of torque, and the 10-speed automatic operated smoothly on the various roads.

The Ford Ranger is relatively compact compared to the American utes at our event this year, and all the drivers felt immediately at home behind the wheel. Rear passengers voted it best on the field for travel comfort. The ranger boasted a set of MSA 4X4 Accessories Towing Mirrors, and we were grateful for the clear and wide vision to the rear in tight spots and on sharp bends.

The SRC-24's tare weight is 2614kg, and with a 3500kg ATM there's a list of utes and SUVs that will suit the budget.

The van sat faithfully behind without complaints, undue movement or harshness through the Cruisemaster DO35 hitch. Lippert sway control was optioned on and it's such a valuable safety feature that I wonder why brands don't make it a standard inclusion.

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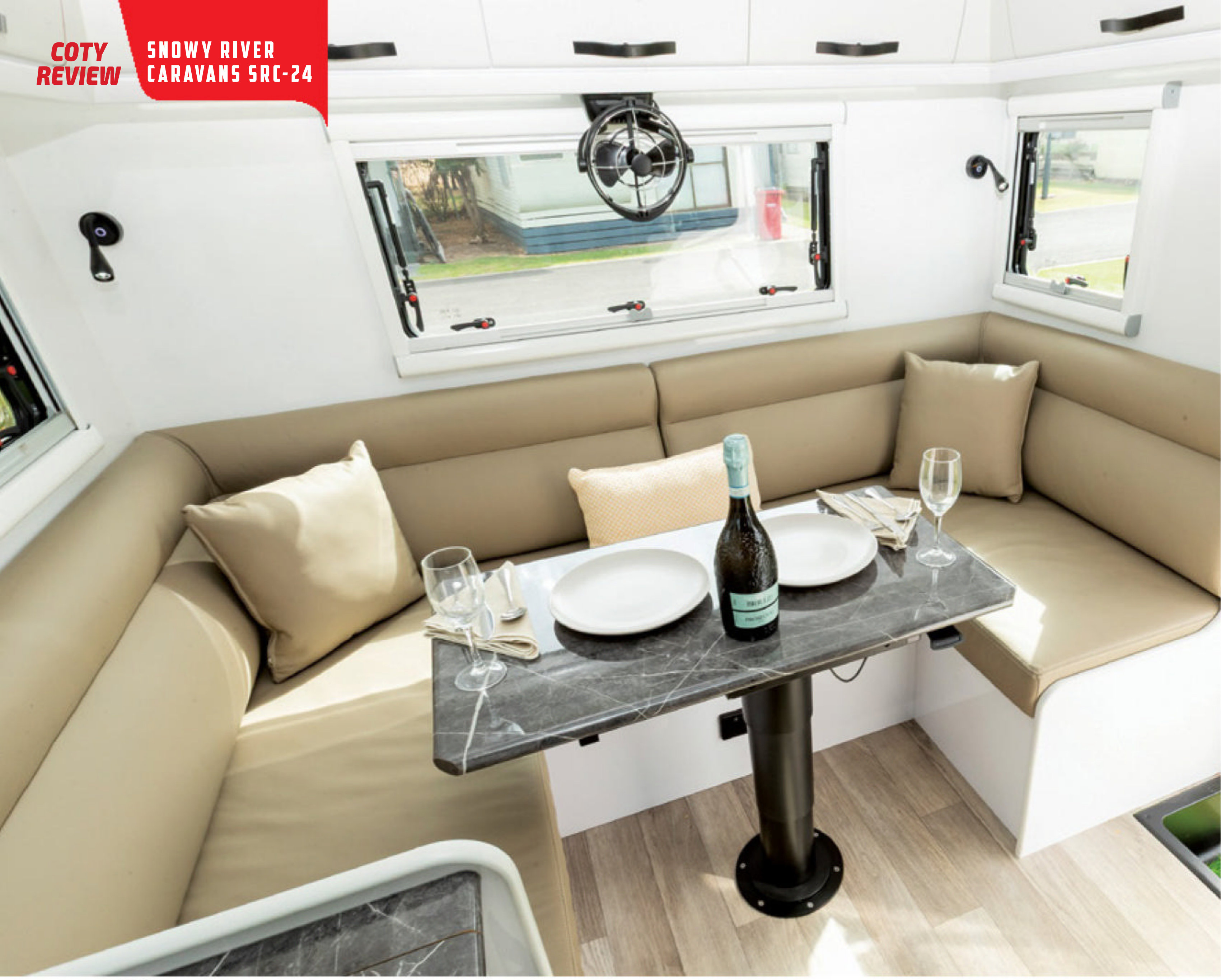
BUILD QUALITY ★

"Composite panels are formed in an automated heat and pressure process *to endure and not delaminate*"

SNOWY RIVER
CARAVANS

ABOVE AND BELOW An easy tow behind the Ford Ranger; Lithium batteries tucked away



ALLISON WATT
▸ DEPUTY EDITOR

SELF-SUFFICIENCY
Relatively new to the Snowy River range, the SRC-24 is a semi-offroad tourer, so you're not going to be taking it down Australia's toughest tracks and staying off-grid in remote areas indefinitely.

It is designed for couples who like a bit of space and comfort and who mainly stick to sealed roads. But if you want to pull over at a 24-hour rest stop and camp for the night or spend a few days off-grid at a music festival or the like, the Snowy SRC-24 has everything you'll need for a few days of 'roughing it'.

It's got good off-grid capacity for a few days if the sun shines and you're careful with water use. The only limitation – as with many caravans – will be your toilet cassette which will eek into your water supply.

ABOVE AND BELOW Spacious club lounge can convert to a bed; Designed for couples who primarily stick to sealed roads but also want the option to head off-grid for a few days

The SRC-24 on review had two 9kg gas bottles up front for cooking and instant gas hot water, two 95L freshwater tanks, one 95L grey water tank, two 100A lithium batteries and a 3000W inverter – all managed by a Projecta battery management system (BMS). Two 180W flexible solar panels on the roof capture the energy from the sun.

With that amount of power, you won't be running the air-conditioning all night – maybe a few hours – but you'll have enough to use your coffee machine or cook a meal in the air fryer, which is more than enough for most travellers.

LIVEABILITY
The SRC-24 is a big van with a layout that is popular with couples spending extended time on the road. With a rear club lounge, central kitchen and bathroom and self-contained bedroom up front, couples can enjoy a bit of privacy from each other if needed. One person can watch television in the lounge area and the other half can close the door and go to bed if they wish.

The rear entry door opens to the spacious club lounge which could easily seat four or five adults in comfort. Surrounded by windows on three sides and with plenty of overhead storage cupboards, the lounge

VALUE FOR MONEY

"At its base price it's great value and you can choose which options will suit your caravanning lifestyle"

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features a pivot/telescopic table which you can adjust to make a very large rear bed for when the grandkids sleep over. There's a TV here and another one in the bedroom if you want to watch different shows.

If you like a bit of kitchen bench space for all your appliances then you will love the SRC-24, which has prep space on both sides. Just inside the entry door on the nearside is the four-burner stovetop (three gas, one induction), sink, drawers and cupboards underneath. There's plenty of overhead cupboards all through the van with new curved fronts which adds a point of difference. On the opposite side of the kitchen is an under-bench microwave, 3.5kg top-loader washing machine, 274L Thetford fridge and slide-out wire pantry shelves.

The central bathroom has a shower with an optioned-on mirror door, cassette toilet and vanity.

Up front, the bedroom has windows on all three sides which gives it a light and spacious ambiance. A sliding door provides privacy from the bathroom and living areas. Again, there is plenty of storage including wardrobes, reading lamps, fans and USB points which are featured throughout.

Outside is basic and functional. There's a big awning to sit under, a picnic table and external speakers.

ABOVE AND BELOW Split central bathroom; The top loader washing machine is tucked below one of the kitchen benches

VALUE FOR MONEY

One of the factors that has seen Snowy River Caravans rise to be among the top-selling vans in the country is its competitive price point, which makes sense given they are manufactured in China using designs from Snowy River's R&D team.

There's no doubt you get a lot of bang for your buck. The base price for this SRC-24 is $77,490 which is great value for money, although the van we judged at COTY 2025 had been optioned up to come in at more than $91,000, so getting up there in price.

The options fitted on the COTY model included bigger 16in wheels and tyres, an extra 95L grey water tank, a DO35 hitch, a second 100A lithium battery, a 3000W inverter, air-conditioner, leather upholstery, as well as quite a few other bits and pieces, so it all adds up.

At its base price it's great value and you can choose which options will suit your caravanning lifestyle.

INNOVATION ★

> “Although this is not an offroad caravan, *it still has plenty of electrical capacity for the easy to get to off-grid locations*”

ABOVE AND BELOW Front bedroom with windows on three sides; Slide-out pantry

MALCOLM STREET
FIELD EDITOR

EASE OF USE

Snowy River’s SRC-24 is a full caravan and thus a fairly straightforward proposition when travelling and at the caravan park. Although the SRC-24 is quite a long van on the road, it’s not overly heavy with a tare mass of 2614kg. Consequently, it is not a difficult towing proposition.

It doesn’t take long to set up at the caravan park once the van is unhitched and levelled. The drop-down corner stabilisers and awning take minimal time to put in position. Having a 7.24m (23ft 7in) body length, the van has the space inside for a rear club lounge layout. That’s great for a couple who like space to relax in. The benefits of the club lounge with panoramic windows are obvious, and the telescopic mounted table offers an extra bed if needed.

The split kitchen offers plenty of benchtop and cupboard space, something any travelling chef will appreciate. The split bathroom in front of the bedroom is well laid out, although the vanity cabinet is quite small with no shelf area. A good use of space is the multi-shelf cupboard adjacent to the shower cubicle, which is excellent for towels and linen. Overall, it’s quite a user-friendly layout.

INNOVATION

It’s not a startling innovation, but one of the strong selling points of the SRC-24 and the rest of the Snowy River range is the full fibreglass sandwich panel body construction. That’s something available

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ABOVE AND BELOW Split kitchen and the sliding door to the bedroom creates dual living areas; Plenty of bench space in the kitchen

in more expensive competitor vans. The vacuum-pressed panels are reinforced with welded aluminium framing. It's not separate but part of the one-piece wall components.

Again, not a new feature but something found on more expensive vans are the options available on the electrical system and fitted to this van such as the extra lithium LiFePO4 battery and inverter. I'd imagine an extra solar panel might be available, too. What this means is that although this is not an offroad caravan, it still has plenty of electrical capacity for the easy to get to off-grid locations that abound in this country.

CUSTOMER CARE

Before any purchase, a good question to ask any caravan dealer/manufacturer is about the warranty details and how the company handles any warranty claims. Some manufacturers are a little coy about their warranty matters, but the Snowy River Caravans website and warranty booklet is comprehensive. Snowy River offers a five-year structural warranty and manufacturer's warranty of two years. Specifically, structural includes the chassis components, wall, roof and flooring panels. Anything made by Snowy Caravans is covered by the manufacturer's warranty, while the respective manufacturers cover any supplied components.

Snowy River has 40 authorised centres throughout Australia that handle warranty matters. The warranty is transferrable to a new owner as long as the proper paperwork is completed.

SNOWY RIVER CARAVANS SRC-24

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Overall length 8.83m (28ft 10in)
Body length 7.24m (23ft 7in)
Width 2.39m (7ft 8in)
Height 3.1m (10ft 1in)
Tare 2614kg
ATM 3500kg
Payload 886kg (calculated)
Ball weight at tare 280kg
Ball to tare ratio 10.7% (calculated)

EXTERNAL

Frame Aluminium
Cladding Fibreglass composite
Chassis DuraGal
Suspension AL-KO 3.5T tandem rubber torsion system
Coupling Cruisemaster DO35 (optional)
Brakes 12in electric
Wheels 16in rims, 245/75/R16 all-terrain tyres (optional)
Water 2 x 95L freshwater, 1 x 95L grey water (optional)
Battery 2 x 100Ah lithium (1 x 100Ah standard)
Inverter 3000W (optional)
Solar 2 x 180W flexible panels
Air-conditioner Dometic FreshJet Pro (optional)
Gas 2 x 9kg
Sway control Lippert sway control (optional)

INTERNAL

Cooking Thetford four-hub (three gas, one induction) (optional)
Microwave 20L Captivating
Fridge 274L Thetford compressor (optional)
Bathroom Separate shower, basin and cassette toilet
Washing machine 3.5kg top-loader
Hot water Fogatti instantaneous

PRICE FROM $77,490

OPTIONS FITTED

- 16in wheels and tyres
- Lippert sway control
- 95L grey water tank
- Cruisemaster DO35 hitch
- 2in chassis raiser
- 1 x 100Ah lithium battery
- Thetford 274L compressor fridge
- Dometic FreshJet Pro air-conditioner
- 12V fan
- Projecta PM300 upgrade
- Projecta 30000W inverter with transfer switch
- Winegard TV Antenna
- Leather TIC cushion upholstery upgrade
- Telescopic table
- Black Pack (Power points, light switches, reading lights, cupboard door handles, square single bowl kitchen sink, oval ensuite basin, taps, shower head and mixer, bathroom accessories)
- Extra annexe light

PRICE AS SHOWN $91,395

MORE INFORMATION
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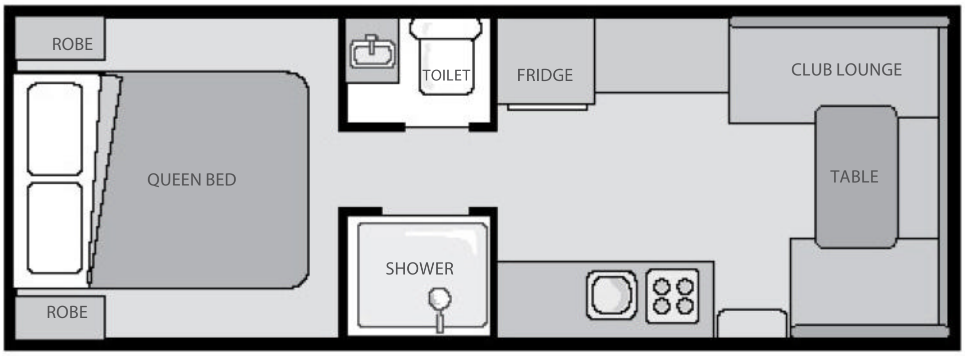
X-FACTOR

The X-Factor for this van may well be what it isn't. Among all the contenders for COTY 2025, it's the one van not designed for serious offroad travel. There's nothing wrong with that; it results in a bit of weight saving. The tried and trusted AL-KO torsion suspension isn't a full independent offroad setup, but it's good for what this van is designed to do. I always like a rear club lounge layout and this one ticks several boxes, including that it doesn't require an oversized tow vehicle.

ABOVE AND BELOW The SRC-24 doesn't need a big tow vehicle; AL-KO torsion suspension



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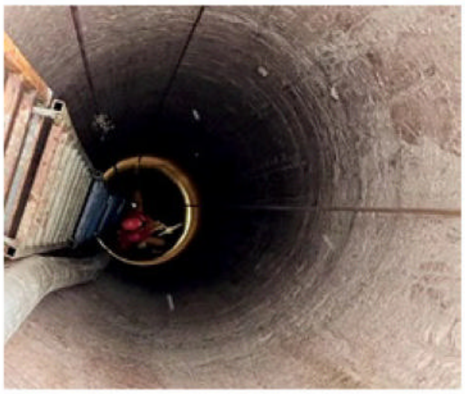
ABOVE Lightning Ridge, home to the famous black opal

OPALS, OUTBACK AND SO MUCH MORE

Words *Amelia Mansell* *Pics* *Supplied*

Discover a world of dazzling opals, outback charm and vibrant festivities at the Lightning Ridge Opal & Gem Festival this July.

OPAL HUNTERS



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Opal hunter Sam Mehan at her signature pink hoist; Outback Opal Hunter; Wander the various stalls and see the best opals and gems Australia has to offer; Sam Mehan climbing down the ladder into an opal mine

Nestled in the rugged outback of New South Wales, Lightning Ridge is a small town with a big reputation, recognised worldwide for its stunning opals – the rare black opal in particular. For more than a century this remote town has been a beacon for gemstone hunters, miners and visitors to experience the unique outback landscape and the fascinating world of opals.

And when better to experience it than at the annual Lightning Ridge Opal & Gem Festival, a celebration of the region's rich opal mining history, gemstone artistry and vibrant community spirit. Held on 23-26 July 2025, the festival is a must-visit for opal and gem enthusiasts and newcomers alike. With a great blend of fun, culture and sparkling gems, the festival is the perfect place to immerse yourself in the best of Lightning Ridge. And to make it even more enticing – entry to the festival precinct is free!

A TOWN BUILT ON OPALS

Lightning Ridge's ties to opal mining date back to 1901 when an entirely new kind of opal was discovered: the black opal. This new variety quickly gained popularity and value thanks to its dark base tone, which helps create greater contrast, more vibrant colours and distinct colour patterns that are unlike any opals seen before.

This discovery set the course for what Lightning Ridge is today; over the decades the opal fields surrounding Lightning Ridge grew, and by 1915 more than 3000 men and women had settled there. The tough mining conditions led to much invention and innovation and as the decades progressed the technology only improved with quite sophisticated machinery now widely used.

Today, the town continues to thrive off its entirely natural opal industry, with mining still the backbone of the local economy. The opals are all mined, cut and polished with no stabilisation and treatments, and are rarer than diamonds – no two opals are ever the same and can be valued at up to $35,000 per carat.

The Lightning Ridge Opal & Gem Festival is a fitting tribute to this heritage. First held in 1971, it has grown and evolved over the years into a major festival that draws thousands of visitors from all across Australia and overseas. What started as a way to bring the community together is now a celebration of opals, gems and the unique character of Lightning Ridge itself.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Visitors and opal enthusiasts from all over the world flock to Lightning Ridge every July to celebrate the beauty and brilliance of opals and other precious gems at this four-day event.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The Opal Queen Ball; Beautiful trophies for the Australian Opal Awards; Models display the entries to the Australian Opal Awards during the Gala Night

The overall festival sprawls through the open-air area next to Agate Street, next to the Bowling Club car park, and spreads into the Spider Brown Oval car park. There are indoor stalls housed in a marquee in the car park, as well as booths in the air-conditioned Multi-purpose Centre, with the entire festival being disabled/wheelchair accessible.

There's no quiet moment at the festival, with each day jam-packed with activities and events for all ages and interests.

Opal and Gem Exhibition

At the beating heart of the festival is the Opal and Gem Exhibition, a vast marketplace where visitors can view, purchase and admire an impressive range of opals, gemstones, jewellery and other gem-inspired crafts. The 2024 event featured more than 200 stalls, and this year's event is sure to be a similarly dazzling showcase of not only high-quality opals from all the Australian opal fields but also an array of other precious stones.

The Exhibition is a great opportunity to experience the work of professional miners, jewellers and gem cutters who will have their stunning creations on display, all four days of the event. It's a great spot for seasoned collectors and those looking for something beautiful to take home as a memento of their Lightning Ridge adventure.

While opals and gems are undoubtedly the stars of the show, the festival will also feature stalls selling other industry-related goods and various other products and crafts.

Demonstrations from the experts

For visitors keen to delve deeper into the world of opals, the festival also features daily live demonstrations from professional opal cutters and carvers. Watch as rough opals are transformed into stunning gemstones through intricate cutting and polishing techniques and get unique insights into this impressive craftsmanship.

Festival atmosphere

To fuel your adventures, there will be various food and coffee vans throughout the festival, so you can grab a bite and sit and enjoy the fun-filled atmosphere. Live music performances also add to the festival vibe, with buskers roaming the streets and some fantastic daily performances by the local school band and choir.

This is a great opportunity for these remote-area students to showcase their skills in front of a large crowd. "A student performance from the musical *Hamilton* last year saw tourists from Canada and the US coming back daily to listen to the choir as they were 'blown away by the voices out here in the middle of nowhere'," said event coordinator Sally Weeks.

The Opal Queen Ball

One of the biggest events at the Opal & Gem Festival is the Opal Queen Ball. This ball is held on Saturday night and marks the conclusion of another successful festival. The Opal Queen Ball is a celebration of the women of Lightning Ridge and their contributions to the local community and the opal industry. The Opal Queen Ball is an elegant affair, and there are some fantastic prizes for the winners, including opal pendants and prize packs donated by loyal festival sponsors.

Ball guests are able to vote for the People's Choice award, and the winner receives a pendant, a prize pack and $500 is donated to a charity of her choice.

Tickets for the ball will be made available on the festival website a month before the ball. The ticket includes entry, a free glass of bubbles, a chance to meet the entrants and witness the winner announcements and presentations, not to mention a great night of dancing and fun.

The Australian Opal Awards

Held concurrently with the Opal & Gem Festival and led by its own volunteer not-for-profit committee is The Australian Opal Awards. The Awards committee manages the booth holders within the Lightning Ridge Multi-purpose Centre in addition to hosting a renowned opal artistry and jewellery design competition that is open to entrants worldwide with a prize pool of more than $30,000.

The competition was created to promote Australian opals at a national and international level and encourages entrants to submit freeform and carved opals in unique and individual creations, rather than the more traditional cabochon-style cuts. The competition is open to all skill levels, but there is a focus on highly polished and scratch-free surfaces, and detail and precision in jewellery settings.

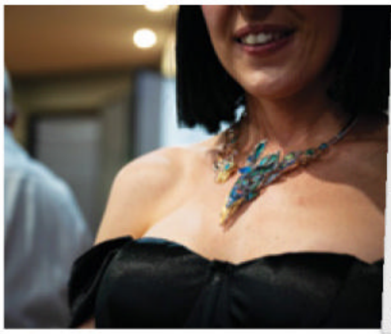
"Opal is truly unique in its form, structure and colour display, so we believe the focus of the competition should be designs that complement and celebrate that," said Victoria Lugovoy, president of the Australian Opal Awards.

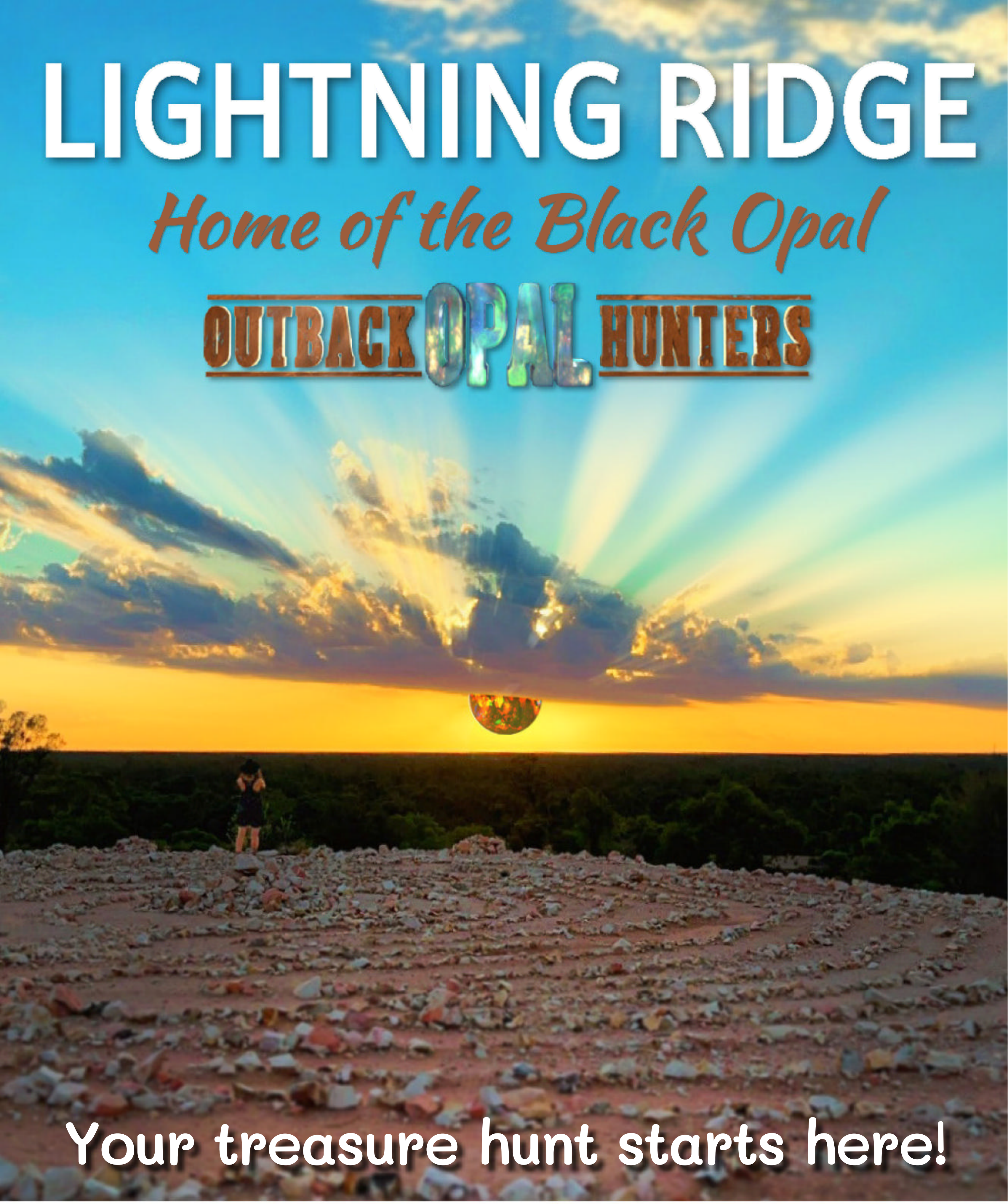
Within the Australian Opal Awards Exhibition are booths displaying and selling top-grade Australian opals and jewellery. Entry is by gold coin donation. Displayed in this venue you will also find the entries into the awards for 2025. As you enter the venue, make sure you grab a 'People's Choice' voting card so you can vote for your favourite piece of 2025.

The Australian Opal Awards and Gala Night is held on Friday evening (25 July) at the Lightning Ridge Bowling Club and is a formal night to announce the winners and showcase the competition's 2025 entries. Locals and visitors will enjoy a three-course dinner with drinks, have the chance to meet people in the industry, the chance to dress up in their finest opal jewellery and snazziest clothes and enjoy live music. During the evening models will be wandering the floor displaying a selection of the 2025 competition creations (look, but don't touch!).

Awards and Gala night tickets are available online now: australianopalawards.com.au

Now that we've got you hooked on the festival, let's delve into the best destinations and experiences to add to your Lightning Ridge bucket list.





LIGHTNING RIDGE

Home of the Black Opal

OUTBACK OPAL HUNTERS

Your treasure hunt starts here!

Lightning Ridge Tourism Association
Black Opal Country

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Amigo's Castle; Lunatic Lookout is a popular spot; Lightning Ridge Artesian Baths; Chambers of the Black Hand underground tourist attraction

LUNATIC
LOOKOUT

EXPLORING LIGHTNING RIDGE

Lightning Ridge is one of Australia's most iconic outback towns, the name recognised worldwide for its connection to the beautiful opal. But that's not all this town has to offer. It offers a unique blend of rugged outback life and artistic style, with plenty of unique attractions and welcoming locals, making it a great place to spend a handful of days, or more, exploring.

Arrive a few days before the festival or stay on longer and make sure you check out some of these spots in town and the surrounding area:

- **Lightning Ridge Artesian Baths:** These naturally heated pools are fed by the Great Artesian Basin, with temperatures between 40 and 42 degrees Celsius. Entry is free and they are open 22 hours a day.
- **Amigo's Castle:** For a quirky stop, be sure to visit Amigo's Castle. This castle was constructed by hand over a 20-year period using ironstone boulders by Vittorio Stefanato.
- **Fossicking:** Try your luck at one of the designated fossicking areas and see if you can find an opal treasure to take home as a memento. (There's a site at the Lightning Ridge Visitors Information Centre.)
- **Opal fields guided tour:** Outback Opal Tours and Black Opal Tours are great options. If you're a first-time visitor to Lightning Ridge and the annual festival, then the guided opal tours are a must. These tours take groups behind the scenes of the opal mining industry, exploring working opal fields, historic mine shafts and the techniques used to extract these valuable stones from the earth. It's a rare chance to see the reality behind the gems that have made Lightning Ridge so famous. Bookings are essential.
- **Visit an opal mine:** Opal Mine Adventure and Chambers of the Black Hand are both open to visitors. Both underground experiences safely allow visitors to see how opal is mined in its natural environment with the latter also encompassing a unique sandstone level which contains more than 800 sculptures carved over decades by artist Ron Canlin.
- **Australian Opal Centre:** An exciting development in Lightning Ridge is the Australian Opal Centre, set to open its first stage around August 2025. Located at the Three Mile Opal Fields, the centre will be a state-of-the-art museum and research facility dedicated to showcasing the opal's significance in the region and Australia wide. This volunteer-driven project has been in the works for more than 20 years.

> "Guided opal field tours take groups behind the scenes of the opal mining industry, exploring working opal fields, historic mine shafts *and the techniques used to extract these valuable stones from the earth*"

- **Outback Opal Hunters:** Now into its 14th season since launch in 2018, this Discovery Channel series follows the fortunes of opal miners across Australia. Watched by some 200 million people in more than 100 countries, it has spawned many heroes – you never know which opal hunter you might accidentally bump into as you work your way through the Lightning Ridge opal fields.
- **John Murray Art Gallery:** The world-renowned artist gallery is a must-see on Opal Street. John Murray's art captures the simplicity of the outback landscape with rich colours and light. You may recognise his artwork, since John's paintings have graced Sydney Airport in the 1980s as well as various other buildings and walls throughout Australia over his career.
- **Opal Shops:** No trip to 'The Ridge' is complete without purchasing a memento, and there are a wide variety of shops to cater for that purpose. Every colour, shape, size and value are available at Lightning Ridge's main street stores where each shop has its own character and uniqueness, just like the opals themselves.

Some other local favourites and hidden gems are:

- **Stanley the 18m-tall emu:** Created by John Murray, this sculpture is located on the Castlereagh Highway, around 3km south of the Lightning Ridge turnoff (Bill O'Brien Way)
- **Self-guided Car Door Tours:** Five colour-coded tours that lead visitors through the opal fields and past places of interest, famous landmarks, opal mining relics, miners' camps, the famous Lunatic Hill open cut mine and also out to the Grawin opal fields.
- **First Shaft Lookout:** A great spot for spectacular sunsets (hint: stay at least 30 minutes past official sunset for the best night sky colours).
- **Glengarry/Sheepyard Seam Opal Fields:** This location features three 'bush pubs', each with their own character. Meals at the Glengarry Hilton are enormous, and if you hang around the pubs, you're likely to bump into a famous Outback Opal Hunter.
- **The Australian Opal Centre 'Spark' outdoor cinema:** Located at Three Mile Opal Fields, this outdoor cinema experience under the stars is held three times a week from April to September.

ABOVE AND BELOW Blower dumping a load of opal dirt; Stanley the 18m-tall emu by local artist John Murray

WHERE TO STAY WITH YOUR CARAVAN

Whether you prefer a comfortable stay with all the amenities or a more off-grid experience, Lightning Ridge has a range of accommodation options to suit different travel styles and requirements.

- **Lightning Ridge Holiday Park:** Located in the centre of town, this park is a popular choice with well-maintained facilities and a mix of cabins, powered and unpowered caravan sites and a camp kitchen.
  W: lightningridgeholidaypark.com.au
- **BIG4 Opal Holiday Park:** Across the road from the Artesian Bore Baths, this spot is perfect for those who enjoy a relaxing soak at the end of the day. There is a wide variety of cabins and sites available and plenty of facilities for the whole family.
  W: big4.com.au

Some other great options are the Crocodile Caravan Park (W: crocodilecaravanpark.com.au) and Lightning Ridge Outback Resort (W: lightningridgeoutbackresort.com.au).

- **Station stays:** If you enjoy quieter stays surrounded by nature, then Lightning Ridge has you covered. Carinya Station (W: carinyastation.com.au) and Lorne Station (W: lornestation.com) both offer unique and caravan-friendly stays where you can experience some classic outback hospitality.

BEST TIME TO VISIT LIGHTNING RIDGE

July is a fantastic time to visit Lightning Ridge – the weather has cooled down and you can enjoy cool, crisp mornings that warm into glorious sunny days, perfect for exploring the outdoor and indoor exhibits at the festival.

On the whole, mid-March to late October is the best time of year to visit this region. Winter and spring tend to have more pleasant temperatures ranging between 16 and 30 degrees Celsius, with low humidity. Summer can be brutal in this part of Australia, with temperatures consistently in the very high 30-40s between December and February.

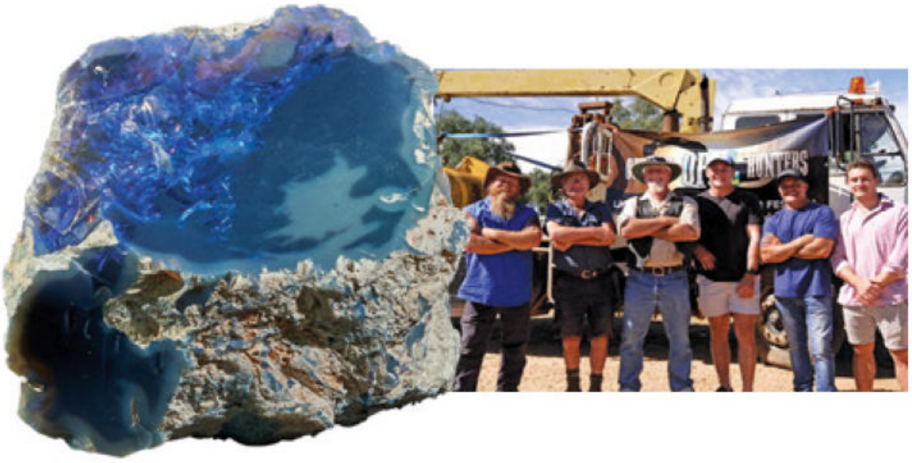
A FESTIVAL WORTH THE JOURNEY

The Lightning Ridge Opal & Gem Festival is more than just a showcase of Australia's iconic and prized gemstone – it's a celebration of the beautiful outback landscape and the communities that call it home. And with a great mix of markets, artistic flair, local storytelling and unique insight into the opal mining and jewellery industry, this festival offers a truly memorable experience for those who make the journey.

Find out more on the festival website: lightningridgeopalfestival.com.au.

Whether you're chasing opals or just curious to explore, Lightning Ridge is ready to reward you with a little outback magic.

> *"It's a great mix of markets, artistic flair, local storytelling* and unique insight into the opal mining and jewellery industry"



JEWELLERY PTY LTD

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The entries to the Australian Opal Awards are on display for public viewing; There will be plenty of stalls to explore throughout the festival; Rough and polished opals — no two stones are the same

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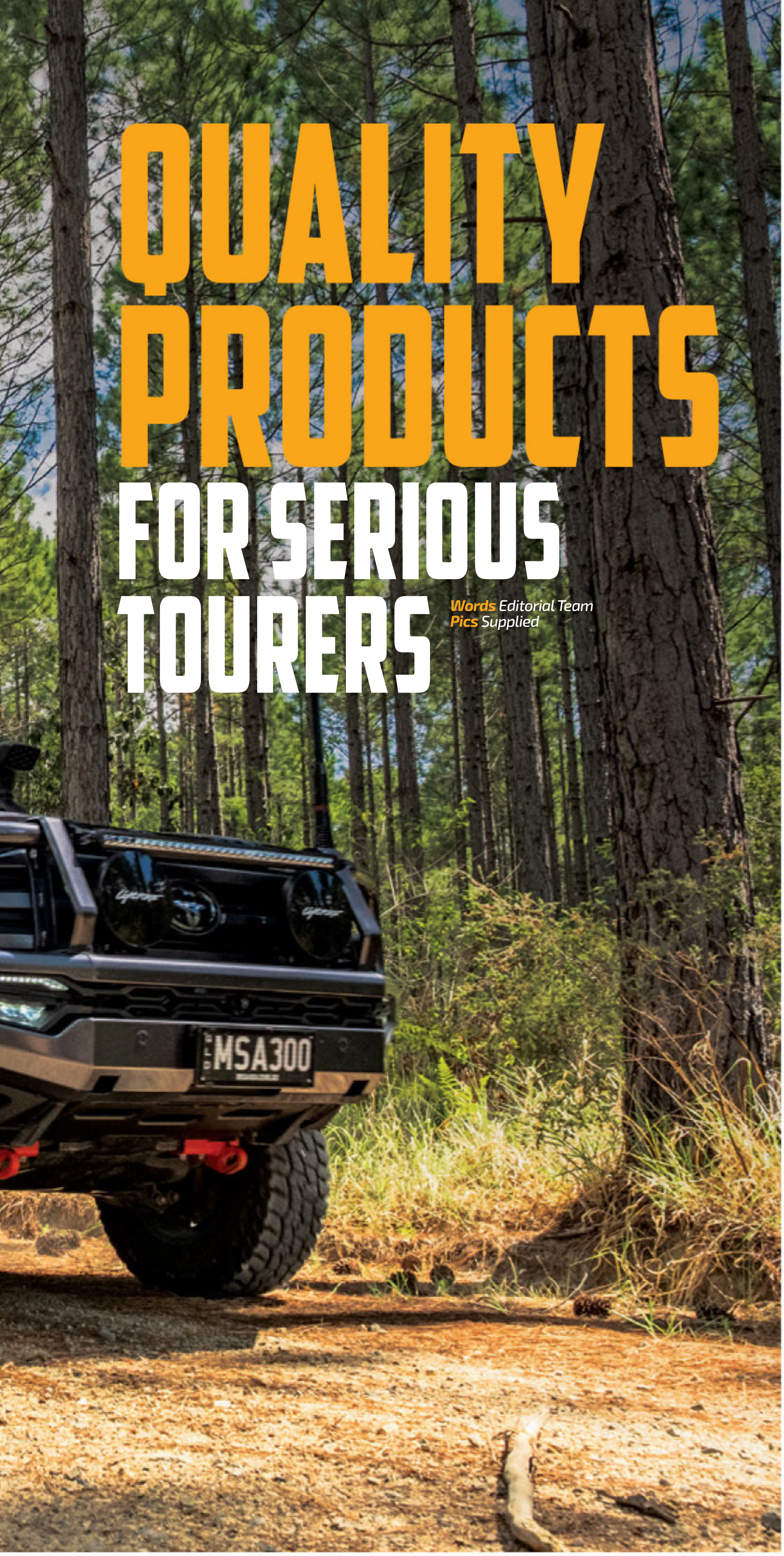

QUALITY PRODUCTS FOR SERIOUS TOURERS

Words Editorial Team
Pics Supplied

LEFT MSA 4X4 Accessories makes quality gear for serious adventurers

From humble beginnings, MSA 4X4 Accessories has built a reputation as a manufacturer of premium four-wheel drive and touring products that are sought after by those looking to create the ultimate adventurer's setup.

What started as a two-person business making canvas products in a tiny garage in the suburbs of Perth, has grown to an Australia-wide company manufacturing some of the most innovative products for four-wheel drivers and tourers.

MSA 4X4 Accessories has many innovations to its name. Some of the more notable mentions include the first ever rear wheel bag which MSA developed in 2003, the patented Drop Slide™ in 2007, the distinctive patented drawer system in 2017 and then the award-winning patented towing mirrors in 2019. The latter of which were put to good use on some of the tow vehicles at this year's Caravan of the Year event, where MSA returned as the naming sponsor for a fourth year running.

"Our products are designed by us, from the ground up," said Shane Miles, director of MSA 4X4 Accessories. "Our designs alleviate problems with any other products available at the time, or meet a need for something that doesn't exist.

"We then engineer and manufacture them to withstand the very worst real-life use and of the highest quality achievable. We take our time to get things right and do not rush to market to release any product until it is 100 per cent correct and safe ... no exceptions," Shane said.

LOOK AT OUR NEW
TOWING MIRRORS
MSA

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE MSA Power-Fold Towing Mirror; A modern, stylish look; They extend to provide a clear line of sight

ENHANCING THE TOURING LIFESTYLE

MSA 4X4 Accessories' range of products and accessories are carefully designed for Aussie travellers who are looking for high-quality, long-lasting gear that won't let them down, are easy and fun to use and only need to be bought once.

"MSA products are designed to help get people out there experiencing our great country, and they will also make their travels more organised, safer and therefore enjoyable," Shane said.

Upgrade your setup with MSA Towing Mirrors

For those who drive daily and tow regularly, having good towing mirrors is a must. The MSA Towing Mirrors are a premium quality and versatile solution, providing clear visibility in all situations and driving setups and maintain legal vision for towing.

MSA's towing mirrors come with many of the same safety features as a vehicle's standard mirrors, such as Blind Spot Monitoring, heated glass for chilly mornings, camera provision, puddle lights and power fold. What sets MSA's towing mirrors apart is their added ability to extend and rotate, giving you a clear line of sight beyond the side of your caravan or trailer when towing. Plus, they look sleeker than standard mirrors.

Stay organised with a MSA Drawer System

Having a good storage system can transform your caravanning or touring experience, and the MSA patented drawer systems are the ideal solution for keeping your gear organised in the back of your vehicle.

"Our drawers were also a ground up design, done by us," Shane said. "They offer a lot of features that others just don't have such as 100 per cent open drawer access to a wide and deep drawer, 100 per cent aluminium construction, an internal LED light system and built-in child restraint anchor points, completely removable side infill panel system, and that's just a few features."

Most importantly, the MSA Storage Drawer System is safe. This is something the MSA team puts a lot of focus on, and the drawer systems are crash tested and Australian Design Rules (ADR) compliant, so they won't cause any insurance non-compliance issues in the unfortunate event of an accident.

Shane noted that considering the safety element of a product is often overlooked when people are purchasing a drawer system for their vehicle, but it should be kept front of mind to ensure the safety of everyone inside the vehicle.

The MSA Storage Drawer Systems meet ADR3/02, ADR34/01 and ADR42 standards and a certificate of compliance is included with every drawer system to give customers peace of mind.

> “Our products are designed by us, from the ground up ... *we then engineer and manufacture them to withstand the very worst real-life use*”

THE ULTIMATE SETUP

Most MSA products are designed to keep gear organised and make life easier while you travel. When it comes to choosing products to create the ultimate touring setup, Shane recommends the towing mirrors as a stand-alone product, plus a drawer system combined with a Drop Slide™, as well as a fridge and cargo barrier setup.

Editor John Ford has created a great setup in his LandCruiser 200 Series using a bunch of MSA products (including MSA Towing Mirrors, Drop Slide™, Storage Drawer System, Explorer Storage Bags and more, so check out his setup on the *Caravan World* website).

MSA has some exciting new products in the works, but the details are being kept under wraps until they are released – stay tuned!

NEW TRENDS

“We are seeing most companies supply a much wider range of products now, and not just the products that they have built their company on and that they specialised in. We also see a lot more imported copies of good Aussie designs out there in the industry,” Shane commented. “We at MSA will keep designing our own unique products that will help make travelling fun, safer and more enjoyable.”

MSA has also expanding its range – never going too far from the touring mindset – with the launch of cooking accessories such as the MSA Deluxe Coffee Kit and MSA Premium Cutlery Pack and even an adventure-ready merch range last year.

BUILT TO LAST

MSA offers a lifetime warranty to the original purchaser on most products. If a product is ever broken or damaged, MSA will always try to fix it for the customer even if it is out of warranty.

“We design, then we test, and test again, always with the fear of failure in mind, we get designs perfect. At no point do we ever want to ruin someone’s trip because of a faulty product, a product they have spent their money on. We treat every product as if it were going to our family,” said Shane.

“We will always go over and above to ensure that we only have the happiest of customers, and we ensure we have great customer service staff always willing to help.”

For further information about the range of MSA 4X4 Accessories products head to its website: msa4x4.com.au

ABOVE AND BELOW MSA Storage Drawer Systems keep gear organised; They can be combined with a Drop Slide™, cargo barrier and Explorer Storage Bags

DUBBO
Gawaymbanha Dhubu-gu
Welcome to Dubbo
Time to smile
4.5km | dubbo.com.au
Pr d home of Taronga Western Plains Zoo
hino Conservation Breeding Program

MAIN Dubbo's famous white rhino welcomes visitors

DOIN' DUBBO

Many caravanners pass through Dubbo, but Miriam Blaker hung around for a few days and discovered some of the town's hidden delights.

Words and Pics **MIRIAM BLAKER**

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Chatting to Kathy from Teddy Goose and Co at the local market; Lots of great local produce; Dumplings at Red Earth Winery; Relaxing by the lake in the Japanese Gardens

> *"Dubbo is a bustling town in the western outback of New South Wales where five main routes intersect"*

It had been a long, hot day on the road – more than six hours – and we were tired and keen to stop. With a few options in mind, and deciding against free camping, I rang ahead. It's $25 I was told, and we'd have power and water, which was particularly welcome in the heat.

But the part I was really looking forward to was the wine tasting and the renowned home-made dumplings. Less than an hour later we arrived and were directed out the back, where we parked our new All Terrain caravan among the vines of this small family-owned winery.

It was our first taste of the area, and it didn't disappoint. While the winery itself, Red Earth Estate, is nothing fancy and in need of a bit of a spruce up, we were greeted with a friendly welcome and some of the best dumplings I've ever had. The wines are good too. Forgoing the tasting for a full and delightfully cold glass of the Estate's riesling and Verdelho, paired with delicious appetisers, it was the perfect decompression after our long day. Much later a spectacular storm lit up the skies above the vines, a fitting way to begin our Western Plains adventure.

We were on the outskirts of Dubbo, a bustling town in the western outback of New South Wales. Here five main routes intersect with a national highway north to Brisbane, south to Melbourne (where we've come from), east to Sydney and west to Broken Hill and Adelaide. Along the Newell Highway trucks far outnumber cars and caravans. But we were not merely passing through – we were stopping for a while.

A bit of history. The district around what's now Dubbo was visited in 1818 by explorer John Oxley. Founded in 1841 it was an established village by 1849, when the gaol had already been in operation for two years. In ensuing years, a town sprang up around the gaol and, in 1966, it officially became a city and the trade centre of an area producing wheat, livestock, timber, fruits and vegetables. Today it's a popular stopover for caravanners with long bay parking near the shopping strip at the rear of Coles and Kmart as well as near the Visitor Information Centre on the corner of Macquarie Street and the Newell Highway.

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One key advantage of iTechworld's power stations is their portability. Lightweight and compact, these devices make it easy to bring reliable power wherever your journey takes you. Whether camping at a well-established site or off the beaten track, charging your devices without being tied to a mains power source offers freedom like no other.

Another major benefit is the ultra-quiet operation of iTechworld power stations. While conventional petrol-powered generators can be disruptive, iTechworld's power stations run quietly, allowing you to enjoy the atmosphere of your surroundings without the annoyance of an engine rumbling in the background. Whether enjoying a quiet night around the campfire or a peaceful morning in nature, the last thing you want is unnecessary noise from your generator!

In addition to being quieter, iTechworld power stations are more environmentally friendly. Unlike traditional generators that require fuel and emit toxic fumes, these lithium-based power stations run without the need for petrol or diesel. You won't have to worry about fuel running out during your trip or the emissions that come with fuel-powered generators.

That said, like any technology, other factors should be considered. While power stations offer an efficient and quiet power solution, they're limited by their batteries, so larger setups or energy-intensive applications may require a larger unit or more frequent recharging. Additionally, while power stations are portable, they still require space in your vehicle or camping setup, and the upfront investment cost may be a consideration for some campers.

Nevertheless, the convenience, silence, and sustainability of iTechworld's lithium power stations make them an excellent choice for caravanners and campers looking for a reliable power solution on the go. Whether off the grid or enjoying a simple weekend getaway, these power stations provide peace of mind, knowing you can enjoy all the creature comforts of home—without compromise.

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> *"In 1977 Dubbo became the first zoo in Australia to be constructed on the open range principle"*

ABOVE The Blizzardfield campground is central to town

GOING WILD

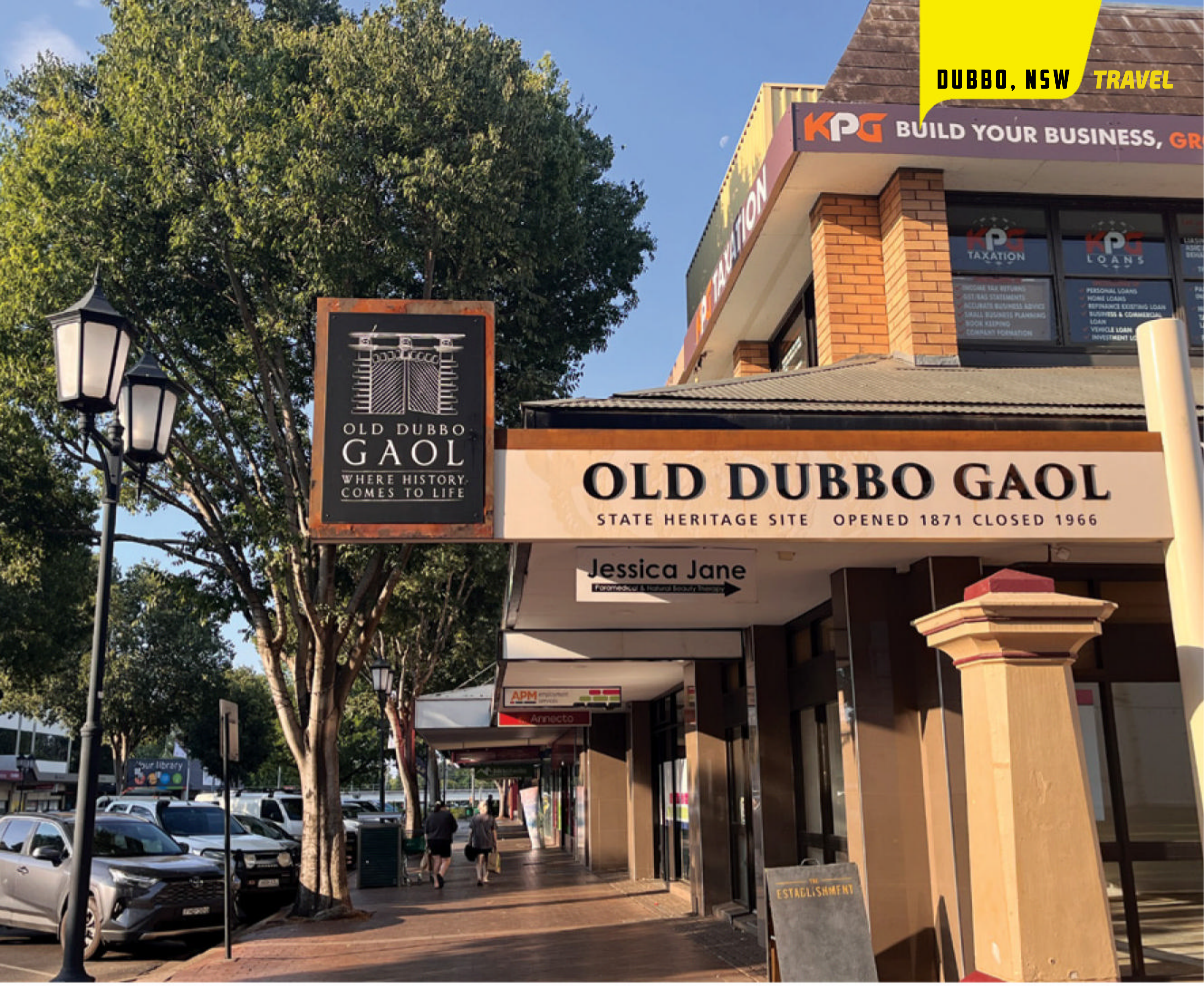
For anyone unfamiliar with the area perhaps the welcome sign gives a clue. The white rhino surely encapsulates the wild nature of Dubbo in the lure of the Taronga Western Plains Zoo. This not-for-profit wildlife sanctuary, in conjunction with Sydney's Taronga Zoo, is undoubtedly one of the most significant zoos in Australia for rehabilitating endangered species.

Formerly an army camp during World War II, the site was transformed into a 300ha oasis and in 1977 became the first zoo in Australia to be constructed on the open range principle. Today visitors can walk, hire a buggy or bike or do what we did and drive the 6km loop, with plenty of places to stop and park along the way.

With maps provided you can time your visit with feedings and ranger talks to get the most out of your experience. Within the five zones – Australia, Africa, Asia, North America and Eurasia – there are many highlights and opportunities for close encounters.

Like big kids we were enthralled by the zebras and giraffes. There are elephants, camels, lions, eland and oryx. The zoo breeds rare and endangered species such as the bison, Galapagos tortoise, southern white rhinoceros and the Przewalski's horse of Mongolia. The zoo ticket is valid for consecutive days so you can go see what you missed on day two.

Less than 2km from the Western Plains Zoo is Dundullimal Homestead, one of Australia's oldest and most refined slab houses. Originally a 10,000ha working property, this National Trust-listed property is a beautifully restored connection to the rural past with Australian iconic architecture, tranquil gardens and stories from the past. Stroll the gardens and enjoy Devonshire tea at the Shed Cafe.

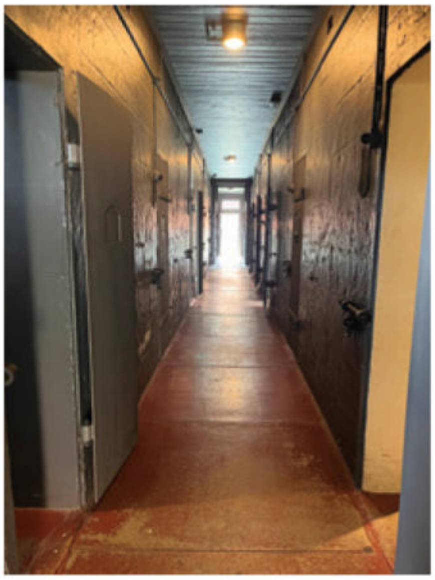

OLD DUBBO GAOL
WHERE HISTORY COMES TO LIFE
OLD DUBBO GAOL
STATE HERITAGE SITE OPENED 1871 CLOSED 1966
KPG BUILD YOUR BUSINESS, GR
Jessica Jane

GO TO JAIL, GO DIRECTLY TO GAOL

Step back in time and find out what happened to those who misbehaved in 1847 to 1966. In the centre of town and behind the walls of this 19th century prison is a museum that brings the not-so-nice history to life through images, sounds and stories. It's unimaginable how cruel the punishments were for minor crimes back in the day.

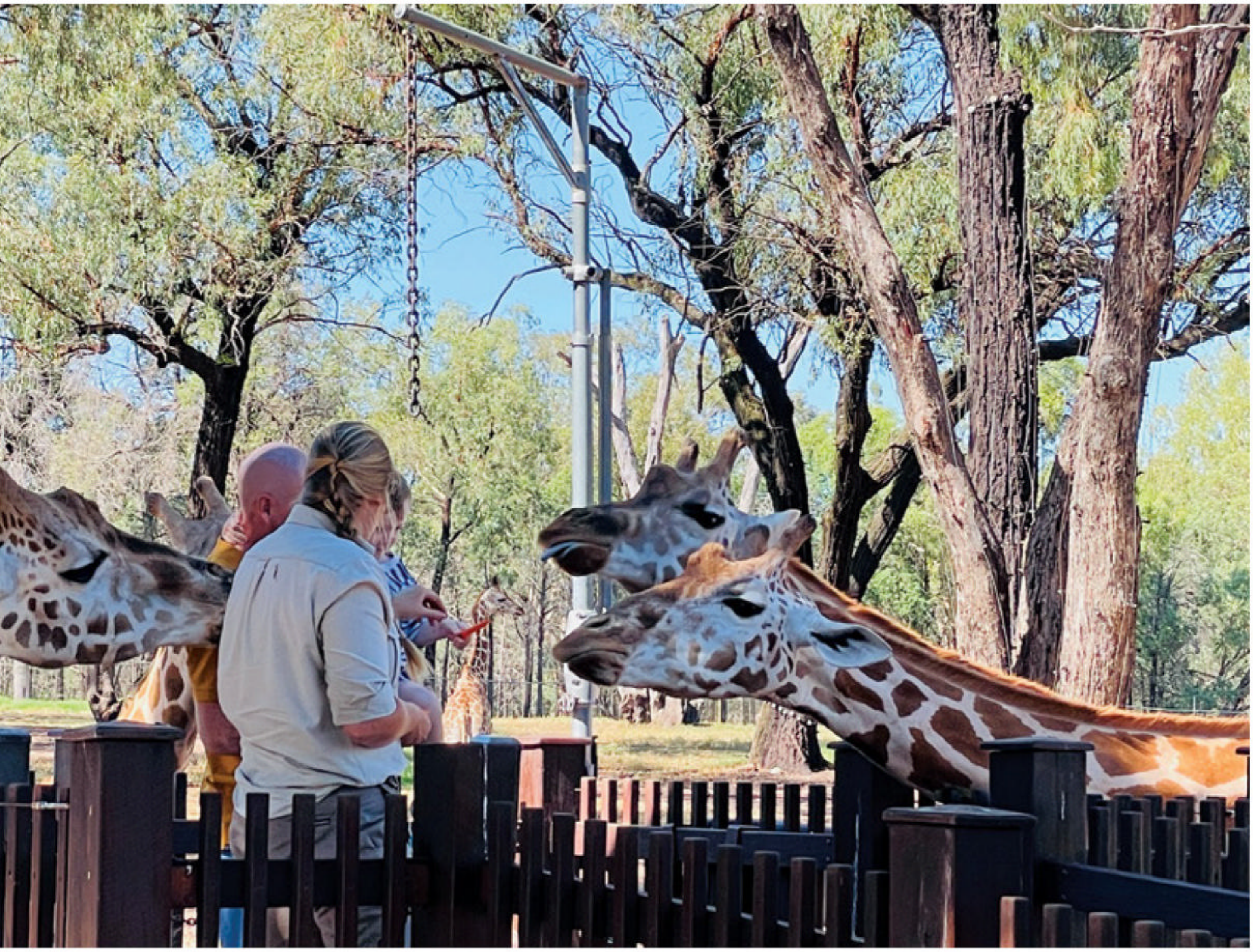
Dubbo's old gaol first opened its doors as a tourist attraction in 1974 and last year it celebrated 50 years. I can't imagine many of the inmates lasting that long.

Walk to the Watch Tower, which was unfortunately closed on our visit due to wet weather. Still, the grey stormy skies were fitting for the escape stories told to us by our enthusiastic guide Jordan. It was eerie, atmospheric and I can imagine a twilight tour would be even more so. Dubbo Gaol is both confronting and entertaining, and like a window into a different era.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The corridors of the Old Dubbo Gaol; The gaol was established two years before the proclamation of the city; Escape attempts were rarely successful

“Within the five zones – Australia, Africa, Asia, North America and Eurasia – there are many highlights and opportunities for close encounters”



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Close encounters at Dubbo Zoo; Stroll the heritage walk to discover Dubbo’s history; Dundullimal is one of the oldest homesteads in NSW

WELCOME TO
NATIONAL TRUST
Dundullimal Homestead
Historic House
Open Monday, Friday, Saturday 11am – 3pm

A TICKET TO ADVENTURE

Head to the Dubbo Observatory for some stargazing or visit the Royal Flying Doctor Service, an important Aussie icon that helps many families living in rural communities. Every dollar spent there goes back into the service. If you want to get the most out of a short trip to Dubbo, consider purchasing The Great Big Adventure Pass online which gets you inside four of the major attractions in the area: the Zoo, the old Gaol, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and a tour of the Wellington caves which are 40 minutes away.

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W: Facebook.com/RedEarthEstateDubbo

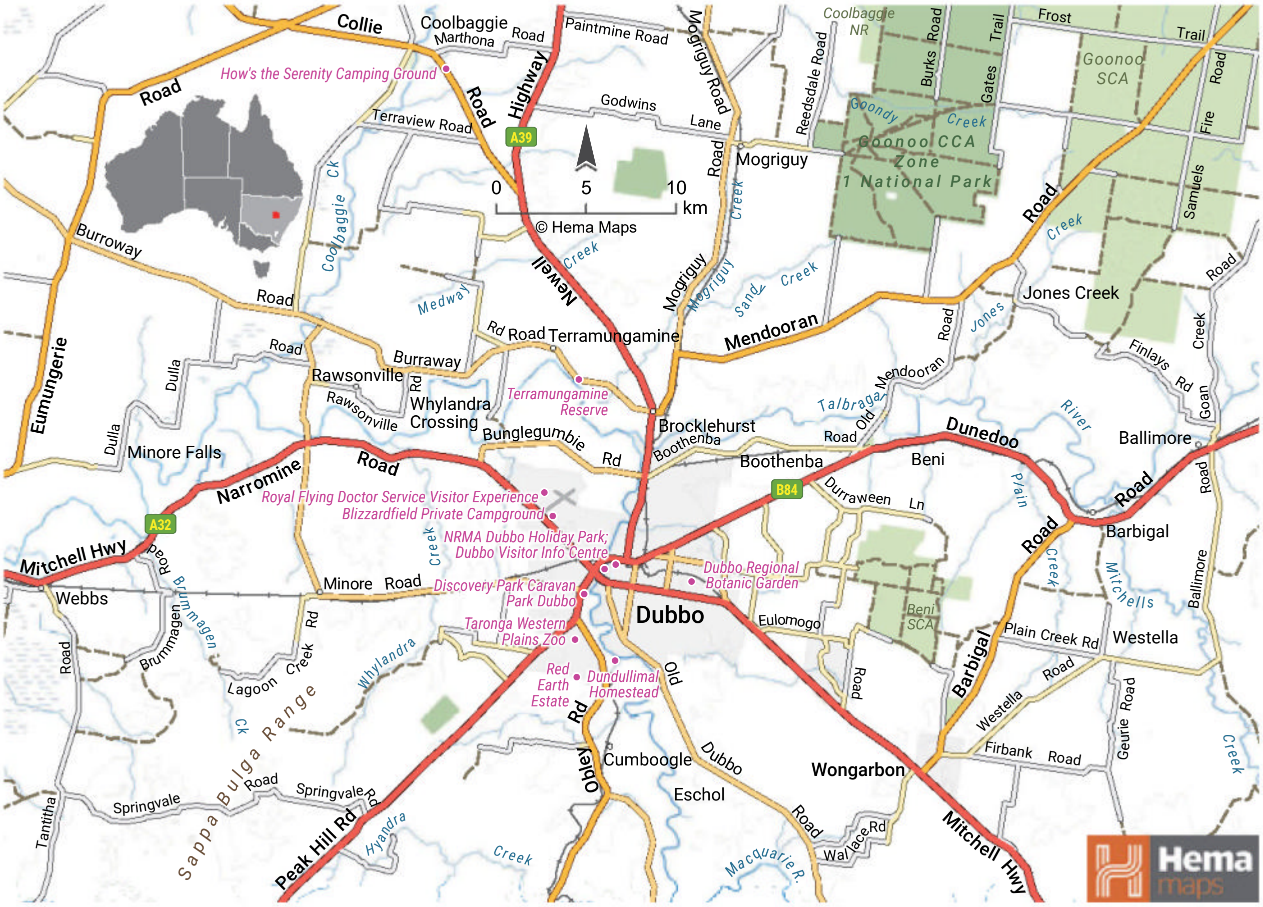
Discovery Park
154 Whylandra Street
Dubbo, NSW, 2830
P: 1800 033 072
W: discoveryholidayparks.com.au

NRMA Park
18 Alfred Street
Dubbo, NSW, 2830
P: 1800 824 820
W: nrmaparksandresorts.com.au

Terramungamine Reserve
Lot 135 Burraway Road
Terramungamine, NSW, 2830
W: Dubbo.org

How's the Serenity
Collie Street
Dubbo, NSW, 2830
P: 0478 876 255 (ring first)
W: howstheserenitycampingground.com.au

Blizzardfield Private Campground
3L Richardson Road
Dubbo, NSW, 2830
P: 0407 638 990



How's the Serenity Camping Ground
Collie
Coolbaggie
Marthona Road
Paintmine Road
Mogriguy Road
Newell Highway
A39
Terraview Road
Godwins Lane
Mogriguy
Goonoo CCA Zone 1 National Park
Goonoo SCA
0 5 10 km
© Hema Maps
Burroway Road
Eumungerie
Terramungamine
Mendooran
Jones Creek
Rawsonville
Whylandra Crossing
Terramungamine Reserve
Brocklehurst
Boothenba
Beni
Dunedoo
Ballimore
Minore Falls
Narromine Road
Royal Flying Doctor Service Visitor Experience
Blizzardfield Private Campground
NRMA Dubbo Holiday Park; Dubbo Visitor Info Centre
Discovery Park Caravan Park Dubbo
Taronga Western Plains Zoo
Dubbo Regional Botanic Garden
Dubbo
B84
A32
Mitchell Hwy
Webbs
Eulomogo
Barbigal
Westella
Red Earth Estate
Dundullimal Homestead
Cumboogle
Eschol
Wongarbon
Sappa Bulga Range
Peak Hill Rd
Obley Rd
Macquarie R.
Hema maps

“Shoyoen is recognised as one of the most authentic Japanese Gardens in Australia ... gifted to Dubbo by its Sister City, Minokamo, Japan”

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The tranquil Japanese Shoyoen Gardens; Cooking breakfast among the vines at Red Earth Estate; The serene grounds at Dundullimal Homestead

FREE AND CHEAP

Grab a map from the Information Centre and stroll the Heritage Trail in town. There’s plenty of historic buildings to discover. If you have bikes, the time and the stamina the Central West Cycle Trail goes for 400km and links the major towns of Mudgee, Dubbo and Wellington. In town the Tracker Riley cycle way is a 13km cycleway loop named after Dubbo’s famous Alec ‘Tracker’ Riley, the first Aboriginal tracker to reach the rank of Sergeant.

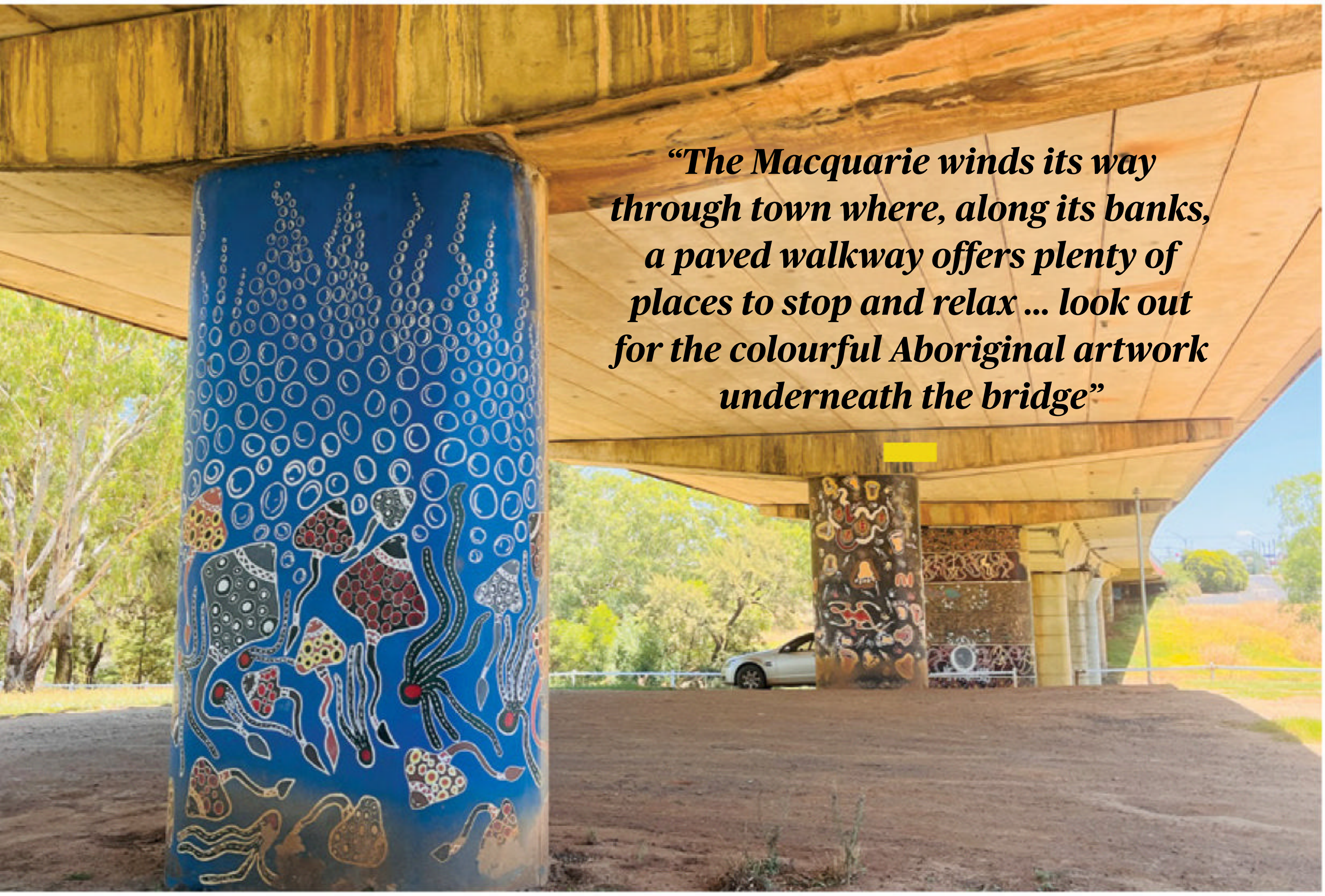
For something more subdued head to the Japanese Shoyoen Gardens off Coronation Drive. Shoyoen means ‘strolling and refreshing garden’ and is truly an oasis, especially on a hot summer’s day. Shoyoen is recognised as one of the most authentic Japanese Gardens in Australia. Gifted to Dubbo by its Sister City, Minokamo, Japan, the garden is full of popular Japanese plants like the Cherry tree, the Japanese Persimmon and Iris.

Visit the tea hut, stroll and enjoy the waterfall and streams and relax by the lake that symbolises human existence: birth, growth and death, Japanese Koi or ‘living flowers’. Dubbo’s regional botanic gardens are stunning and feature a Biodiversity Garden, the Sensory Garden and the cool surrounds of Oasis Valley.

In warm weather Sandy Beach, located along the Macquarie River, is a great place to relax. Located behind the shopping strip, the Macquarie winds its way through town where, along its banks, a paved walkway offers plenty of places to stop and relax. Look out for the colourful Aboriginal artwork underneath the bridge.

On the first and third Saturdays of the month the Farmers Market in the Macquarie Lions Park is the place to pick up fresh local produce. We timed it perfectly and stocked up on some preserves, chatting to locals like Kathy from Teddy Goose and Co. who told me she’s been bottling since she was eight, learning from her grandmother. The sign on the jar of Zucchini Mustard Pickles reads “Made in a little farmhouse kitchen by a smiley faced gap-toothed girl who loves to cook. Teddy and Goose were the best cat and dog I ever had.”

There are stories to be found everywhere. Western Plains Cultural Centre is the creative soul of Dubbo, housing the Dubbo Museum, a regional art gallery and modern café. It’s free to enter and has some fascinating exhibitions to discover.



"The Macquarie winds its way through town where, along its banks, a paved walkway offers plenty of places to stop and relax ... look out for the colourful Aboriginal artwork underneath the bridge"

ABOVE AND BELOW Artwork on the bridge over the Macquarie River; Entrance to the Japanese Shoyoen Gardens

DREAMTIME IN DUBBO

There are five caravan parks in town, a couple of centrally located ones and quieter parks on the edge of town. The Discovery Park is near the zoo and Red Earth Estate, where we stayed the first night, is also only a short drive from the zoo. For those travelling with dogs the NRMA park is a good option with fenced-in dog sites, a great pool area and within walking distance to hotels and Thai food.

The Dubbo Showground has a public dump point, but camping is restricted to those travelling with horses. However, 10km north of town is a great free camp spot at Terramungamine Reserve on the banks of the Macquarie River. It has tables and seating, a toilet, bins and plenty of space. On our visit the grass was overgrown and the tables hard to access but hopefully council maintenance will improve that. Close by is a walk to the groovings, a rocky outcrop beside the river which includes about 150 grooves carved by Aboriginal people who once used the hard stone to sharpen their stone axes.

How's the Serenity is another popular spot 20 minutes north of Dubbo. As the name suggests, the farm stay offers a quiet, peaceful and secluded setting. Set on 2000 acres, this family-owned farm, with reasonable rates for their powered and unpowered sites, will have you stargazing with no telescope needed.

My pick in Dubbo is Blizzardfield, a private campground that's not so easily found on the reinvented Wikicamps App, but well worth seeking out, just ring first. It's only 6km from central Dubbo and offers 30 well-spaced campsites, many with power. Set among shady trees, this quiet campground caters to fully self-contained rigs. Look for the two giraffes, which is the entry point to the campground.

Pete is the owner, but he was out on a family crisis when we visited, so we met Kathy and Dave, who'd been helping watering lawns. They're full-time travellers and no strangers to Dubbo having stayed at Blizzardfield for many months last year when they had to pull up stops for a while.

Sites are green and lush and there's access to power, water and laundry facilities. Mr Darcy, the gentle giant German Shepherd, welcomes us. Dave reckons, and I agreed, it's a gem and a bargain at $30 for a powered site.

Dubbo has a big yearly calendar of events with shows and festivals catering for foodies, car enthusiasts, history lovers and seekers of all things wild and wonderful. This hub of the west is rural and relaxing and worth hanging around for a few days, to do it justice.

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KIMBA – A VIBRANT ESCAPE HALFWAY ACROSS AUSTRALIA

The small town of Kimba in South Australia is a popular stopover for those traversing the Nullarbor Plain, but if you spend a few days there's so much more to see (and do) than its famous giant pink galah.

Set against the striking backdrop of the Eyre Peninsula's rugged and untamed landscape, Kimba is far more than a convenient stopover on the journey between Australia's east and west coasts. With a welcoming spirit, vibrant atmosphere and plenty to offer every kind of visitor, Kimba is a great little town that invites travellers to stop, unwind and discover its many charms at their own pace.

Kimba marks the eastern gateway to the Gawler Ranges and is a region known for its vast open skies, rugged hills and mountains, salt flats, lakes and abundant wildlife. Nature lovers will find no shortage of scenic highlights, whether heading out towards the coast – just over an hour away – or venturing the short drive into the outback.

The Barngarla people are the Traditional Owners of the ancestral lands of Kimba and districts. The first pioneer settlers arrived in the area in 1905, with Kimba officially becoming a township in 1915. By 1908, early farming efforts were underway, including the first planting of wheat using horse-drawn ploughs – marking the beginnings of the region's strong agricultural roots.

ABOVE AND BELOW Kimba's giant pink galah; The town's silo art

CAM SCALE 17

> "Kimba is a great little town that invites travellers to stop, unwind *and discover its many charms at their own pace*"

EXPLORE LOCAL ART AND HISTORY

- **The Big Galah:** There wouldn't be many visitors to Kimba who don't stop at the Halfway Across Australia souvenir shop to get a picture with the 8m-tall Big Galah. Originally built in 1993, the galah underwent a quirky makeover in 2021.
- **Silo Art:** The silo art by artist Cam Scale was painted in 2017 using 200L of paint. It is worth a visit, especially at night when it's illuminated by solar lighting (Kimba Gateway Hotel has great views).
- **Local art:** There's lots of street art to see including the High Street mosaic created by artist Karen Carr in 2019 and which features dancing dunnarts, mallee fowl and a guitar-strumming lizard. The Sharing our History mural is located at the recreation reserve and the Love is in the Eyre Mural can be found opposite Workshop26 on High Street. Kimba has also just unveiled a new art piece on the side of the town hall (Cross Street) which was also completed by the amazing Cam Scale.
- **Workshop26:** Housed in a revamped tractor shop, Workshop26 is Kimba's creative quarter – a melting pot of makers and micro-businesses where you can see the masters like the in-house soap maker at work. You'll also find locally made homewares and gifts, plus vintage and repurposed treasures.
- **Edward John Eyre Sculptures:** Just a few kilometres out of town on one of the region's many walking trails are the metal sculptures created by Roland Weight and Marcus Possingham in 2011. These figures are a tribute to explorer Edward John Eyre and Aboriginal tracker Whylie, whose bush skills Eyre so often relied on. Eyre is remembered as the first man to cross the continent and to record exploration of the three sides of the peninsula named in his honour.
- **The Kimba and Gawler Ranges Historical Museum:** Run by the Kimba and Gawler Ranges Historical Society, this museum comprises 17 buildings full of agricultural machinery, one teacher school building, a pioneer shop and a pine and pug home. Guided and self-guided tours are available.

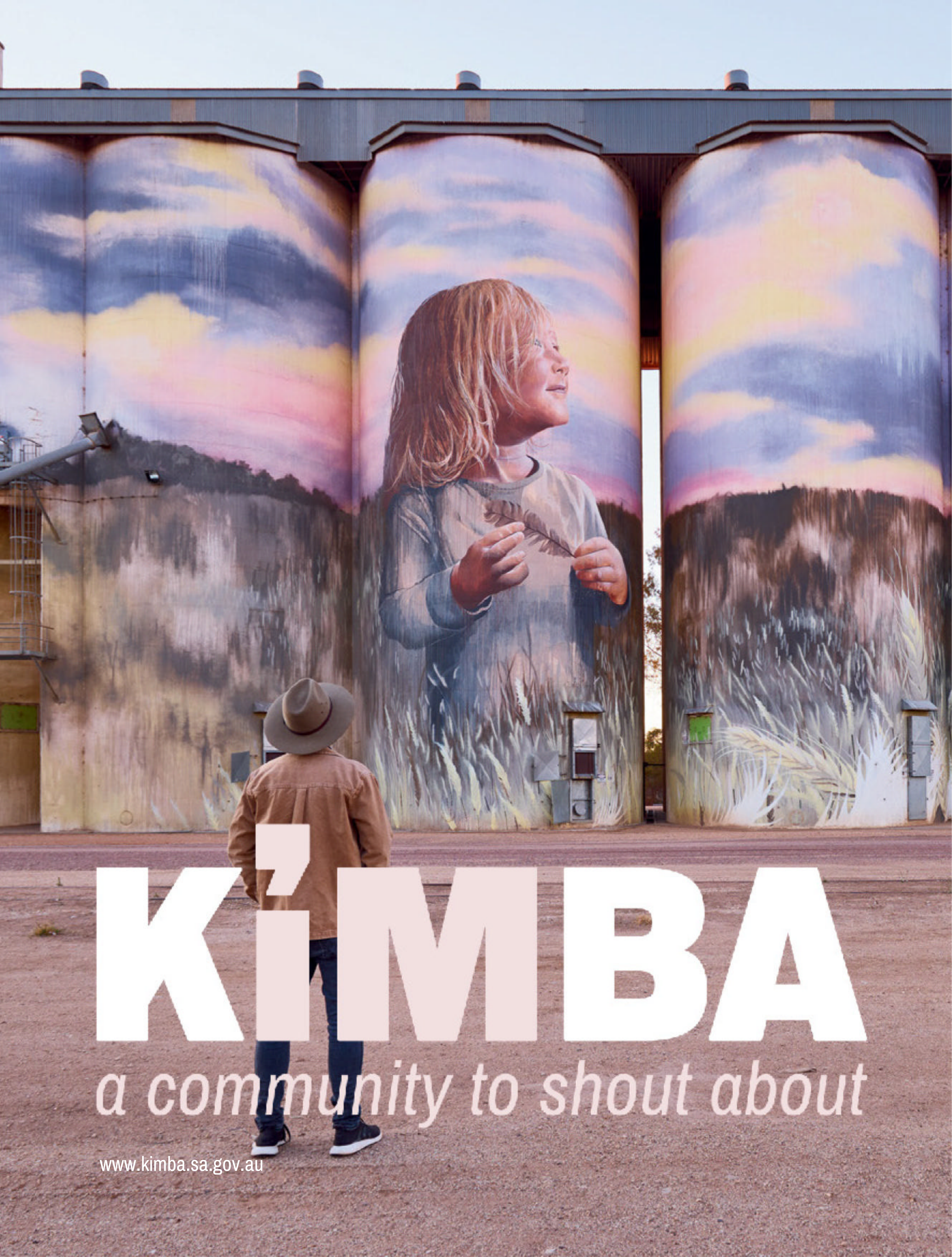
And for the kiddos, there's the all-abilities playground and jumping pillow for hours of fun.

CAMP KITCHEN

BREW-BE-LIVE

THE SMALL TOWN SOAP

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Workshop26 is the town's creative quarter; The kitchen at the town's free camp; Start your day of exploring with a warm brew from the Coffee Pot


KIMBA
a community to shout about
www.kimba.sa.gov.au

> "Gawler Ranges National Park is renowned for its Organ Pipes, some of the largest volcanic rock formations in the world"

ABOVE Caralue Bluff Conservation Park is another great area to explore near Kimba

AN OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST'S PARADISE

If you enjoy twitching, hiking, four-wheel driving or simply enjoying the great outdoors, there's plenty on offer in the Kimba region:

Gawler Ranges National Park
Located 100km east of Kimba, Gawler Ranges National Park is renowned for its Organ Pipes, some of the largest volcanic rock formations in the world. The park is home to a range of native flora and fauna, best visited during the cooler months.

It features a number of 4WD and walking trails and attractions such as Old Paney Homestead, Policemans Point, Kolay Mirica Falls, Yandinga Falls and the Organ Pipes. There are seven campgrounds in the park, all of which are caravan and camper trailer friendly.

Roora Nature Trail
Located directly across the road from the Kimba Recreation Reserve (a free camp spot) in town. This 6km walking trip takes you to the very top of the Whites Knob Lookout where you'll find the 8m-tall sculptures of Eyre and Whylie depicted overlooking a 360-degree view of the area. Bird watching tracks safely take you into the reserve for plenty of viewing opportunities. A guide on the flora and fauna is available and can be collected from the drop box at the head of the trail.

Also in this area is a kids' nature bike trail full of jumps and turns to burn off energy after a long day of driving. The adults can sit back and watch the kids from the nearby shelter complete with picnic table and benches.

Secret Rocks Nature Reserve
This reserve has walking trails around the conservation area, allowing access to safely view the flora and fauna such as malleefowl, bandicoots and pygmy possums – without leaving any damage.

Lake Gilles Conservation Park
Only 18km from Kimba on the Eyre Highway, Lake Gilles Conservation Park comprises salt lakes, low sandy rises and isolated stony hills, and there are a number of drives and walking trails available around the lake.

Pinkawillinie Conservation Park
This location is great for 4WD enthusiasts. A vast area of bushland that boasts vibrant wildflowers during spring, a popular 4WD attraction is Corrobinnie Hill consisting of unusually shaped granite rocks.

Bascombe Rocks
If you're a star gazer, Bascombe Rocks – located on a sealed road about 20km out of town – is the perfect lookout for uninterrupted views of the skies.

Best fishing spots
While there may not be a beach in Kimba, it is only an hour away from great fishing spots at places such as Cowell, Arno Bay and Lucky Bay.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT TO KIMBA

If you've got a few days (or more) to spend in Kimba, locals recommend starting the day at 9.30am with a lazy coffee/breakfast stop at Eileen's cafe (closed weekends) and coffee lovers should wander over to the Coffee Pot for round two. If you're an early bird, the Kimba Cafe, Big Galah Roadhouse or Shell Roadhouse are open for breakfast earlier in the day.

Have a wander around town and admire the art installations including the new piece by Cam Scale on the town hall before heading to Workshop26 for a unique shopping experience.

Everyone who passes through Kimba has to stop for a selfie at its famous Big Galah and the 'Halfway Across Australia' sign to celebrate making it to this iconic halfway point.

The historical museum is open by appointment, and you can spend the afternoon being guided through the site, where local insights bring early pioneer life to light. Then head over to the pub for a good old-fashioned country meal and enjoy a beer or maybe a glass of bubbles in the beer garden that overlooks the silo art which is lit by solar lights at night.

If you're feeling more adventurous, or have more time to spend in Kimba, wake up early and get a head start on exploring the Gawler Ranges, wind your way through stations to the park where the Eastern Gateway has views like no other. Climb up the Kolay Mirica Falls, check the rocks for lizards or small ponds for any tadpoles, head on a 4WD adventure along the smaller tracks and take on the hiking trails at your leisure. Finish the day back in Kimba and make use of the car wash to scrub off the red dirt.

HOW TO GET TO KIMBA

- **From Adelaide:** Approximately 468km. Take the Princes/Augusta Highway (A1) to Port Augusta and then the Eyre Highway through Iron Knob where you can check out the steel works – guided tours are available.
- **From the west:** From Perth it's a massive 2143km trek, but if you're coming from Ceduna then it's a more doable 313km along the Eyre Highway. Check out Wudinna on the way in or come via the Gawler Ranges (Minnipa or Wudinna Gateways).

CARAVAN-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION

There is no shortage of places to stay in and around Kimba with or without your caravan and it's a great base camp for your adventures in the surrounding area and down into the Eyre Peninsula. Here are some of the best caravan-friendly options:

- **Kimba Recreation Reserve:** Great for caravans, RVs or even a tent or swag, this free camping area is conveniently located in the centre of town and allows travellers to stay for up to five days (longer stays can be arranged with the council).

  This camping area is well setup for travellers, offering plenty of amenities that make extended stays comfortable and easy. There are two toilet blocks, two coin-operated showers (bring your $1 coins) and what many call the most user-friendly dump point in the region. The camp kitchen is a fan-favourite, featuring four free barbecues, multiple sinks, plenty of bench space and seating, and even baking paper dispensers for easy clean-up.

  This free campsite has taken out top honours as the Best Grey Nomad Council Free-Stay Campsite in Australia for three years running, and now proudly holds a place in the Grey Nomad Awards Hall of Fame.
- **Kimba Motel Roadhouse and Caravan Park:** Located right on the Eyre Highway, this caravan park provides a mix of powered and unpowered caravan-friendly sites, along with clean and comfortable motel-style accommodation for those travelling without a van. Guests also have access to a range of facilities.
- **Gawler Ranges National Park:** There are seven campgrounds in the national park that offer varied amenities. All are suitable for caravans and camper trailers, but make sure you check the vehicle requirements before you leave. Bookings are required and can be made online.

LEFT AND ABOVE The free camp at the Kimba Recreation Reserve; Plenty of nature walks

BEST TIME OF YEAR TO VISIT

The cooler months of April through to October is the best time to visit Kimba and when sightseeing and day trips will be more enjoyable. It's also the time of year you will see wildflowers in the region.

The town is quieter during the hotter summer months.

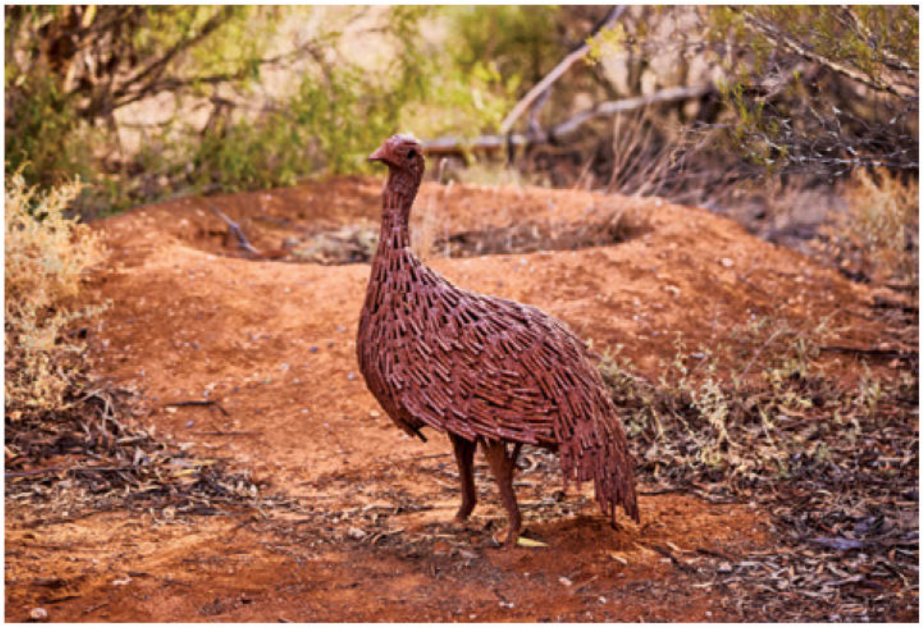
WHAT'S ON IN KIMBA

Plan your visit to Kimba to coincide with some terrific events in the latter part of the year.

- **Kimba Agricultural Show (mid/late September):** First established in 1921, this is one of only 122 agricultural shows still surviving. See a range of exhibits from art, agricultural produce, preserves, shearing, horses in action, hobbies and handicrafts, wool and cooking.
- **Workshop26 host Rural Women's Day (early/mid-October):** A full day of sessions and speakers inspiring women across the Eyre Peninsula. Check their socials for more details.
- **Biennial Kimba Art Prize (all October 2025):** A vibrant celebration of fine art and photography, drawing in an impressive lineup of talented artists from across South Australia and beyond. The exhibition showcases a diverse range of creative works, making it a must-visit for art lovers and cultural explorers alike.
- **Remembrance Day Service (11 November):** Held at the Kimba Soldiers Memorial Gardens on High Street. Join council-elected members and staff, community and RSL members in observation of the day.
- **Workshop26 Christmas Markets (early December):** This creative little quarter comes alive during the festive season and is abundant with a range of stall holders.
- **Kimba Christmas celebrations and pageant (mid-December):** Join the community for a big street party to celebrate the end of the year. There'll be entertainment, food and a pageant full of local faces.

MORE THAN JUST A STOPOVER

Whether you're staying a night or settling in for a few days, Kimba offers the kind of small-town hospitality, natural beauty and quirky artistic charm that makes any road trip memorable.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Bird's-eye view of Lake Gilles National Park; Great skies for stargazing; Mallee fowl at Secret Rocks Reserve

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GVM UPGRADES – WHAT GOES INTO IT?

Learn about GVM upgrades for dual cab utes and SUVs with expert advice from the Adrenalin Offroad Centre, ensuring safer towing, load handling and optimal vehicle performance.

Words and Pics *John Hughes*

ABOVE The upgraded vehicle is inspected after 500km

Ever wondered what goes into a gross vehicle mass (GVM) upgrade of a modern dual cab ute or SUV? Put most simply it is a process of rerating a vehicle so it can legally carry a larger load than standard. Even if you don't tow a caravan many vehicles set up for long-range touring are pushing GVM limits with the weight of the accessories mounted to the car. When you factor in the extra towball load a caravan contributes to the tow vehicle weight, there is a very good chance your GVM should be reviewed.

In this story we chat with Jamie, store manager from Adrenalin Offroad Centre, about the practical side of organising a GVM upgrade through a 4WD specialist shop. (If you want to learn more about the theory of GVM upgrades check out the feature in issue 650 and on the *Caravan World* website – search 'A guide to tow vehicle upgrades'.)

We took a bunch of pictures during our time at Adrenalin Offroad so you can get an idea of the parts that get swapped out, but it is not intended to be a 'how to' article. The GVM approval process requires GVM kits to be fitted by an accredited installer. This is what we learned from Jamie.

ADRENALIN OFFROAD CENTRE
Freedom
Inspire

ABOVE Jamie, store manager at the Adrenalin Offroad Centre

> “We educate our towing customers that our GVM upgrades do not *increase tow ratings or gross combination mass (GCM)”*

UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER’S REQUIREMENTS

“The first thing we do with the customer is understand if a GVM upgrade is a good idea by determining what the weight of the vehicle will be when finally loaded. If the car is already on the road and set up how the customer wants it, the process is simpler in some ways. It’s important to remember the towball weight of the caravan becomes part of the vehicle payload and contributes to the GVM. Once we have a handle on the weight we can recommend the most suitable suspension configuration. If the vehicle is stock or not yet fully configured, we need to work with the customer to understand where the weight is likely to end up. We take into account accessories like bullbars, winches, underbody protection, long-range fuel tanks, canopies, rooftop tents, water tanks, drawers and, of course, towball downloadings. Fortunately, we fit all this stuff so we have a very good handle on how this will contribute to the total weight. If the weights are going to stay within the original factory GVM we may recommend not to proceed with a GVM upgrade. Instead, we can look at a suspension upgrade to improve the ride or ground clearance without rerating the vehicle.

“We educate our towing customers that our GVM upgrades do not increase tow ratings or gross combination mass (GCM). We also let customers know that if a vehicle is already registered it requires an approved automotive engineer to sign off on the vehicle in its entirety, not just the suspension kit we fit. This adds a few hundred dollars to the process provided the engineer doesn’t require any other changes. However, if a GVM upgrade is done before registration we do not need an engineer sign-off.

“If we determine that a GVM upgrade is the best option, we then figure out with the customer which preapproved GVM upgrade kit from our preferred supplier (Ironman 4x4) is the best option. It involves choosing the most appropriate spring ratings and shock absorber grades. As a general guide, for the front end of the car, we offer spring ratings based on whether there will be a bullbar fitted or not. At the rear, we factor in whether the loads vary or remain fairly constant. For example, having a van on or off can easily change the rear load by 300kg or more. If the vehicle is often not fully loaded, we aim for lighter springs that best suit how the vehicle will be driven most of the time. Choosing heavy springs for a car that only spends a small amount of its time doing heavy towing will result in a harsh ride when the van is not hooked up. If the vehicle is constantly loaded, we look towards heavier springs.

GVM UPGRADE
IRONMAN 4X4 PTY LTD
APPROVAL No. VTA-060553
IRONMAN ISUZU D-MAX RG1 IM
VIN
06/2024
GVM 3500 kg CATEGORY NA SEATS 5

ABOVE A new GVM upgrade plate is fitted

ABOVE The original suspension ride height is recorded

"We also have to be mindful of how the loads impact on the front and rear axle load ratings. Again, heavy caravans can make a big difference really bumping up the rear axle weight but also decreasing the front axle weight. As far as shocks go, we offer the choice of a mid-spec foam cell shock or a premium foam cell shock for heavy-duty applications. We also let the customer know that the GVM upgrade kit will raise the car around 20-50mm.

"As far as pricing goes, most of the dual cab ute GVM kits are about the same. A standard kit with mid-spec shocks is about $4.5k if installed before registration. Even a higher-end kit with premium shocks installed after registration with engineering approval will set you back about $6k installed.

"The final step is to check whether the particular GVM upgrade requires higher load-rated wheels or tyres than the original factory equipment. Obviously, this will add some more cost, but most customers are comfortable with it as they often plan to switch wheels and tyres anyway."

ABOVE The standard front strut assemblies are removed

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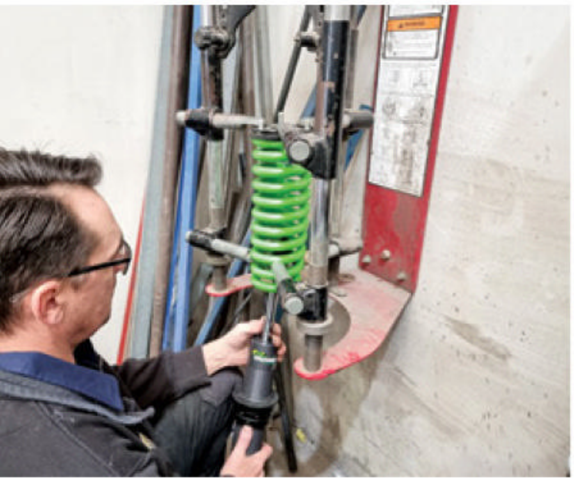
THE GVM KIT INSTALLATION PROCESS

"We are working on an Isuzu D-MAX right now and it is typical of what we do on lots of utes. SUVs are pretty similar except they usually have rear coil springs instead of leaf springs.

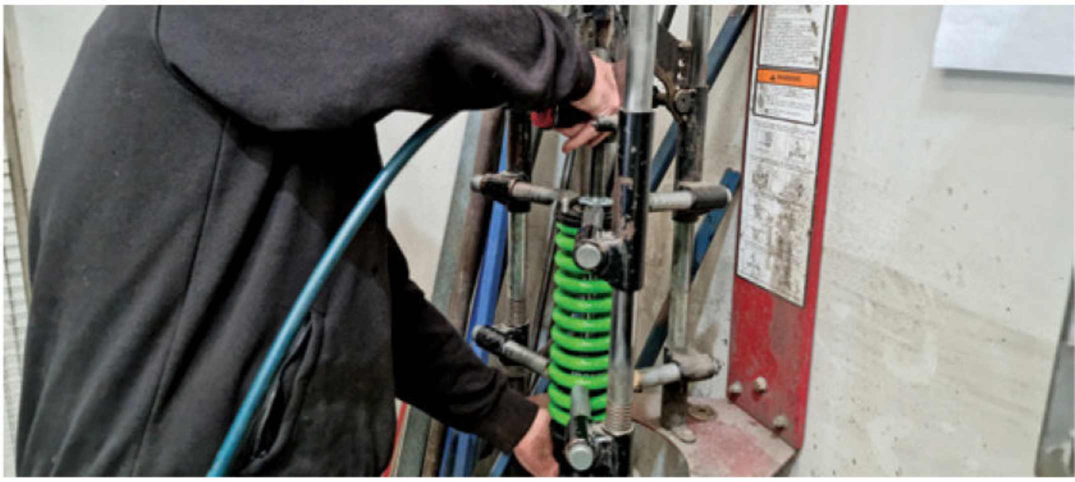
"Our first step is to take ride height measurements of the car before we install the kit. This involves measuring from a nominated point on the rim to the top of the wheel arch. We repeat the exercise when the install is finished so we can see the lift is within suitable parameters.

"We take the ride height measurements for a few reasons. Customers are generally keen to know that they have got what they paid for, and we can demonstrate to them that the vehicle has improved body ground clearance. We also want to be sure that the vehicle doesn't sit too high. There are legal limits on how much a car can be raised and we don't want to go over that. Also, if the car is raised too high it can alter the suspension geometry to the point of driveline components operating on angles outside their design parameters which can cause premature wear or failure.

ABOVE These struts can have the ride height adjusted during assembly



ABOVE A jig is used to compress the spring to enable the strut to be fitted



ABOVE The strut and spring are assembled in the jig

ABOVE The standard upper control arms are removed

ABOVE The new upper control arms are fitted

> *"Customers are generally keen to know that they have got what they paid for,* and we can demonstrate to them that the vehicle has improved body ground clearance"

"Next, we get the vehicle up on a hoist and remove the standard front strut assemblies. In this instance the new front strut and spring need to be assembled together. You can see immediately the new ones are much beefier than the original equipment. Some struts have the ability to have the ride height adjusted during assembly, so we do that now. We use a jig to compress the spring to enable it to be assembled to the strut. For this upgrade the customer also opted to replace the upper control arms (UCAs) to enable greater adjustability of the suspension geometry for more precise wheel alignments. So, it's out with the old UCAs and in with the new. Then we can fit the new strut assembly to the car.

"Moving onto the rear, we unbolt the standard rear shock and remove it. Next, we remove the standard shackles, U-bolts and rear leaf springs. It's grease time with the bushes and shackles receiving some lubrication. The new heavy-duty rear springs are lifted into place and secured to the chassis with the new shackles – they have grease points for ongoing maintenance. The new U-bolts are used to secure the new leaf springs to the rear axle. The U-bolts are longer to accommodate the extra thickness of the spring with more leaves than standard. Next, the new rear shocks are fitted. The final step in the fitting process is relocating the rear brake lines to allow for the increased travel of the car.

"Once the fitting process is finished, we take the vehicle for a brief test drive to check that everything sounds and feels right. After that, we measure the new lifted height and compare it to the original height. We then organise a front-end alignment to bring everything back in spec. The final physical step is to fit the vehicle with a new compliance plate indicating the new GVM rating of the vehicle."

ABOVE The new front strut assemblies are fitted

ABOVE The original rear shocks are removed

ABOVE The original shackles are removed

ABOVE The original U-bolts are removed

ABOVE The original rear leaf springs are removed

ABOVE The new bushes are greased and fitted into the upgraded rear springs

ABOVE The new shackles are greased

ABOVE The new rear springs are lifted into place

ADMINISTRATION AND POST-FITTING CHECK

"Usually, we get the suspension fitting process done in a day, but the administrative process can take a few days. We supply photos and measurements of the installation to the Ironman 4x4 head office. They review the information and approve if everything is in order. If the vehicle is a pre-registration fitment, Ironman 4x4 HQ log with a government department that the vehicle is now second-stage manufactured in the Register of Approved Vehicles. If the vehicle is post-registration, we need to make a time for an automotive engineer to inspect and approve the vehicle. The engineer provides a certificate that the customer has to take the vehicle to VicRoads to have it officially registered with an upgraded GVM.

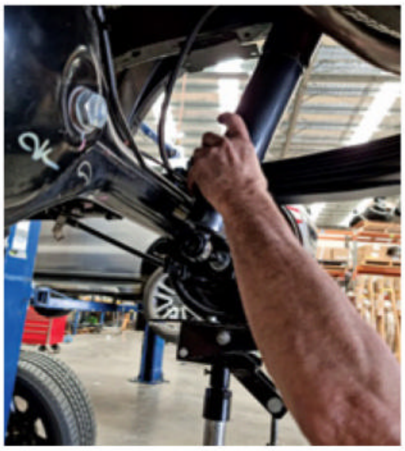
"We require customers to bring the car back after it has done 500km to retighten bolts and do a general check over."

DO YOU NEED A GVM UPGRADE?

A GVM upgrade may or may not be the best option for you, but it is often a good way to get the most out of your vehicle and keep it legal and safe while towing. Choosing the right suspension option requires a fair degree of knowledge and experience. If you go with a GVM upgrade kit it needs to be fitted by accredited installers as part of the certification process. It pays to find a 4WD fitter you trust such as the Adrenalin Offroad Centre to work through and implement the best solution for you.

ABOVE The new rear springs are secured to the chassis with the new shackles

ABOVE The new rear springs are secured to the diff with new longer U-bolts



ABOVE The new rear shocks are fitted

ABOVE The brake lines are repositioned

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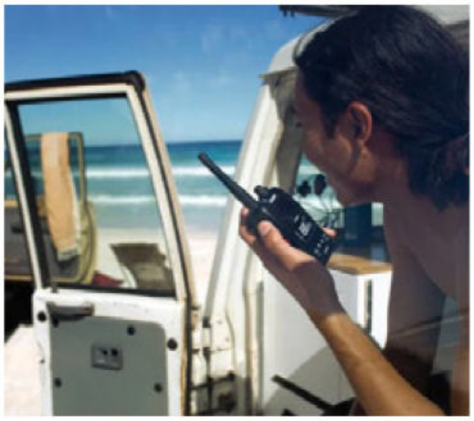

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MAIN Meg Law and her family go road tripping in outback Queensland

OUTBACK QUEENSLAND ODYSSEY

Nothing beats a good old-fashioned family road trip. Meg Law hit the road to southwest Queensland with her family to explore the remote towns of outback Australia.

Words and Pics **MEG LAW**

LAND ROVER
YRW 623
VICTORIA - THE PLACE TO BE
ARB

“Shades of ochre, rust and vibrant red dusty tracks, outback sunsets, big skies and remote pubs awaited us”

BETOOTA HOTEL

ABOVE AND BELOW Camping at the Betoota Hotel; The family arrives in Birdsville

WELCOME TO
BIRDSVILLE
DE IT
WHAT'S
SNOWY RIVER

“What the heck is that, Dad?” yelled my youngest boy as the 4WD came to a screeching halt. As the red dust cleared on the bumpy track, we tried to make sense of the giant yellow blob sitting in the middle of the track.

“Umm ... that would be a giant wild camel having a rest, son!” said Dad. And with that came raucous laughter. Life in the outback is full of surprises, you never know what you will see at every turn.

We were on a family road trip through the remote towns and historical sites of southwest Queensland in our trusty old army green Land Rover Defender, looking like the Leyland Brothers, but with kids in tow – as well as a 20ft caravan.

Shades of ochre, rust and vibrant red dusty tracks, outback sunsets, big skies and remote pubs awaited us ... lifelong memories were about to be made.

OUTBACK STATIONS AND SPAS

'Cause I'm the fella from Cunnamulla,
Yes, I'm the Cunnamulla feller...'

Slim Dusty blared over the old speaker, the hot outback sun beat down on us and there was no air-conditioner in the old rattler as we drove along the corrugated road towards Cunnamulla.

My husband was at the wheel with his tanned face and worn-in Akubra on, whistling a tune, completely in his element navigating the outback tracks. I had my feet on the dashboard and there was a trail of red dust in the rear vision mirror. Our two kids were in the backseat adding up their tally of how many wild emus, cows and roos they had seen on the journey, so far – not to mention the tumbleweeds randomly whirling across the road.

Our great Aussie outback adventure had well and truly begun as we set off to explore the remote outback towns of South West Queensland to chase sunsets, sleep under the stars, swim in the artesian hot springs, slide down the red desert sand dunes of the Simpson Desert, watch a true-blue fair dinkum camel race (more on that later) and search for dinosaur fossils.

ABOVE AND BELOW Daisy on a cattle station; Matt enjoying the hot springs at Charlotte Plains

> *“Scattered about are outdoor bathtubs with giant rusty pipes spilling out artesian bore water”*

ABOVE AND BELOW Daisy enoys life on the outback station; Matt enjoys a cold frothy outside the Betoota Hotel

ARTESIAN BORES

First up was a visit to the much talked about and Insta-worthy Charlotte Plains.

Located near Cunnamulla, this popular destination offers private and public Artesian springs and an insight into life on an authentic Australian sheep station. After many days of driving in our rattling old 4WD, a day spent relaxing and soaking in hot natural bore baths to soak off all the dust felt like five-star luxury.

Scattered about are outdoor bathtubs with giant rusty pipes spilling out artesian bore water. You’d be forgiven for thinking it looked a bit rough around the edges but with water reaching temperatures of 42 degrees and full of rich minerals, it is the perfect place to splash around with the kids and rest those weary muscles.

After some epic stargazing, we tucked the kids into their bunks and pretended we were all shearers and roustabouts after a long day sorting out fleece. Such a novelty.

XXXX
WARREGO HOTEL MOTEL

REMOTE PUBS

Travelling through outback Queensland, it is almost a rite of passage to ensure you visit as many remote pubs as you can along the way to have a beer with Duncan, of course. Many are steeped in history, and have so many stories to tell … if only the walls could talk.

We visited the Toompine Pub near Quilpie – affectionately known as 'The pub with no town' – for the most delicious pub fare and a chat with the locals. Other pubs that we visited were Nindigully, Cunnamulla, Eulo, Hungerford and the iconic Betoota Pub near Windorah (where we camped overnight before going to the Birdsville Big Red Bash). One highlight was having a cold ale at Noccundra pub (situated 142km west of Thargomindah along the Adventure Way), built in 1882, where the publican enjoyed telling us that our family of four outnumbered the local population of three.

ABOVE AND BELOW The Warrego Hotel in Cunnamulla; Meg at the Birdsville Big Red Bash

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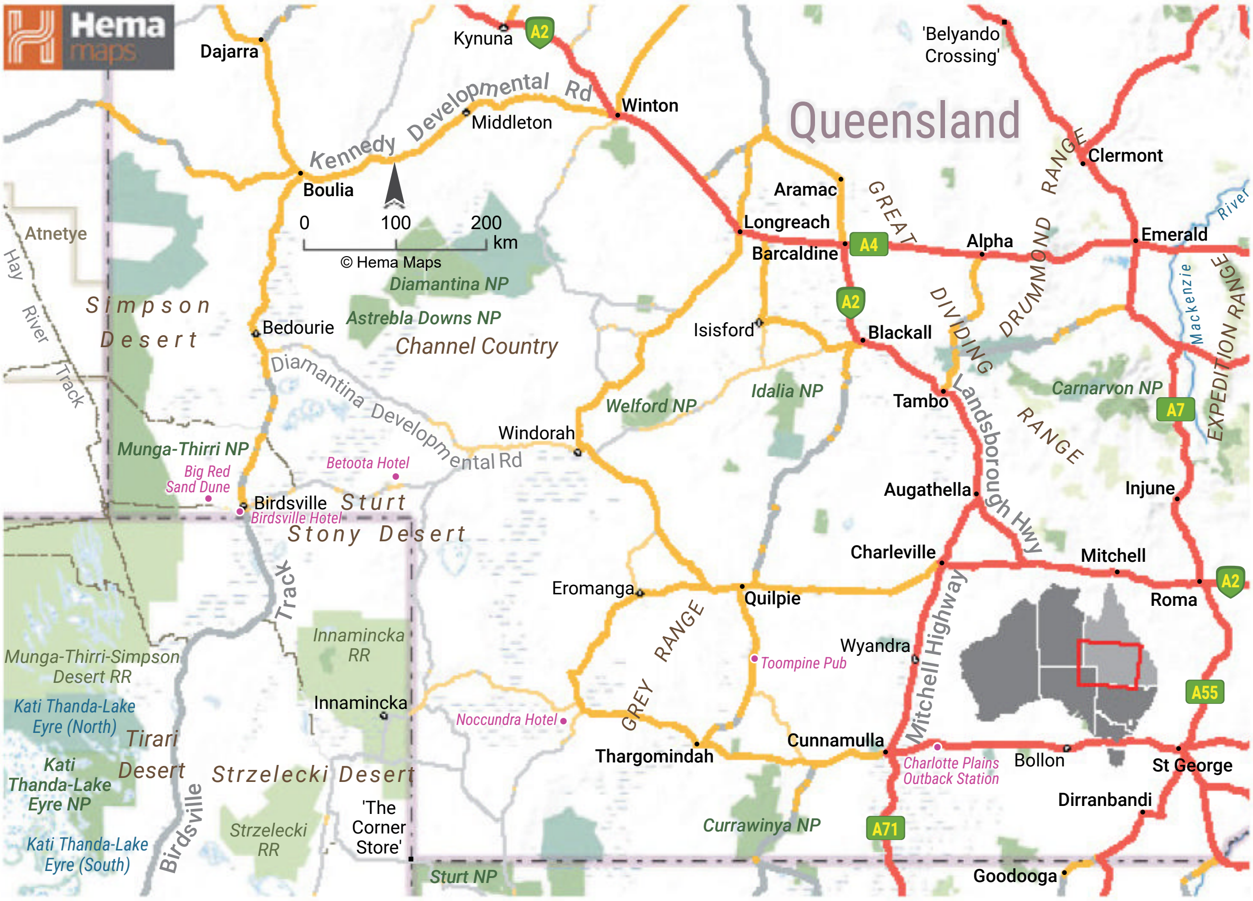
RIGHT Home is where you park your rig

Then there is the famous Birdsville pub which comes alive every year for the world's most remote music festival, the Big Red Bash. Aussie musicians make the trek to the Simpson Desert in South West Queensland, along with more than 8000 other Aussie revellers, to travel out of town towards Big Red – the highest sand dune in the Simpson Desert. Under a vast, star-speckled canopy they spend three nights entertaining people from all around Australia and beyond.

It is truly a wild outback adventure to remember as the desert springs to life. The base of Big Red is transformed into a temporary town with its own network of roads and pathways. The camping area sits on the dried-out bed of an ancient lake with the giant red rust sand dune as a backdrop. It forms a natural amphitheatre making it the perfect setting for an outback concert.

Live tunes all day long over the three days and no wi-fi, phone reception, showers or mod cons to be seen. Instead, it's communal compost long drop toilets, a sea of tents, swags and caravans, fly nets, Akubras, Blundstones and good old Aussie camaraderie.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Mitchell Highway
Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert RR
A55
Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre (North)
Tirari Desert
Innamincka
Noccundra Hotel
Thargomindah
Cunnamulla
Charlotte Plains Outback Station
Bollon
St George
Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre NP
Strzelecki Desert
Dirranbandi
Birdsville
Strzelecki RR
'The Corner Store'
Currawinya NP
A71
Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre (South)
Sturt NP
Goodooga

LEFT AND BELOW Jasper dancing on top of Big Red; The Cunnamulla Fella

> ***"Under a vast, star-speckled canopy they spend three nights entertaining people from all around Australia and beyond"***

TRIP PLANNER

WHERE TO STAY

Charlotte Plains Outback Station:
Outside Cunnamulla, the station has the outdoor spa experience/artesian springs and campground. A day pass is $15 for adults, $10 for children and kids under five years are free. Camping sites are available at different prices depending on if you want unpowered or powered. Alternatively, you can sleep in the Shearer's Quarters or a Merino Cabin. There are various amenities available at each of the camping areas, such as hot artesian baths, flushing toilets, hot showers, laundry facilities and camp kitchens. Pets are permitted at both the camping areas. For more information, visit charlotteplains.com.au or phone 07 4588 8804.

Toompine Hotel
Located just outside Quilpie, the Toompine Hotel is known for being 'The pub with no town' and has limited camping options available next to the creek, free of charge. You can book these by phoning ahead on 07 4656 4721 (no online bookings available). There are some basic facilities available, including hot showers and flushing toilets.

Betoota Hotel
This iconic pub is located around 220km west of Windorah, Qld, and is a popular stopping point for those heading to the Birdsville Big Red Bash. Being quite remote, it's a good spot to stop with your van overnight and enjoy the free camping and hot showers, available for only $5 a night (or a bit more if you want to sleep indoors in the shearer's quarters and meet some of the residents of this outback 'ghost town'. They also serve a classic outback pub dinner for only $25.

OUTBACK EVENTS

Birdsville Big Red Bash
Known as the most remote outback music festival in the world, the Birdsville Big Red Bash is taking a break this year. But the iconic event will be back in 2026, so save the date for 7–9 July 2026 and get ready to rock the Simpson once again. Head online to find out more: bigredbash.com.au

Some other outback events and festivals to add to your list for 2025 are:

Boulia Camel Races:
18–20 July 2025
Held every July, the Boulia Camel Races are a great experience for all ages when exploring remote outback Australia. Tickets range from $60 per adult per day and kids under 18 years can enter for free. There is caravan-friendly camping available onsite, and the price is included in your ticket. Alternatively, book a glamping package for a pre-pitched bell tent.
W: bouliacamelraces.com.au

Broken Hill Mundi Mundi Bash:
21–23 August 2025
As the only outback music Bash happening this year, tickets are selling quick. The festival is held on Belmont Station, with the Mundi Mundi Plains transforming into Australia's biggest caravan park for three days.
W: mundimundibash.com.au

CAMEL RACES

The fun didn't stop there. Along our outback road trip, we visited the Royal Flying Doctor Service base in Charleville, climbed Baldy Top Lookout in Quilpie, passed fields of white, cotton-like snow, did the silo art trail, opal-ing, went searching for dinosaur fossils in Winton, swam in inland rivers and remote waterholes and witnessed the most majestic sunrises and sunsets along the way. Not to mention we even attended our first-ever camel race.

Forget bucking broncos, bulls, ropes and barrel racing, which is the typical rodeo you find in remote Queensland. In the small town of Boulia, Qld, every July you will be greeted by the expected sea of denim, checked shirts and cowboy hats – but this isn't your typical rodeo.

In Boulia, the crowds gather and the campers pitch tents on the grass, the familiar waft of snags and steak fills the township, the beer is cold and the audience places its bets and gets ready to watch the camels run along a racetrack. This annual grassroots event attracts big crowds from all over Australia who gather for two days to compete for the winning title.

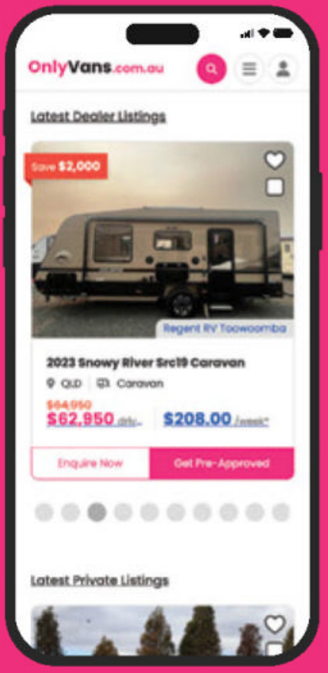
With dust flying in every direction, spectators leapt from their seat, shouting out their support. It's easy to think you are caught up in an old Wild West movie, with a twist. Having seen a wild camel in the middle of a road earlier on our road trip, it was hilarious to see the camels hurtling along the track in a plume of red dust – no jockeys, just camels doing their thing.

EXPLORING OUR SUNBURNT COUNTRY

Travelling throughout Australia as a family is a great way to connect with the land. From the sweeping red plains to the rugged beauty of the bush, orange-hued sunsets and sunrises set against a vibrant blue sky, you can't help but be in awe of this vast country and tip your hat to the greatest adventure down under.

> ***"From sweeping red plains to the rugged beauty of the bush, orange-hued sunsets and sunrises against a vibrant blue sky, you can't help but be in awe of this vast country"***

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Daisy and Meg at the Big Red Bash; On route to Birdsville; The sunset from atop Big Red



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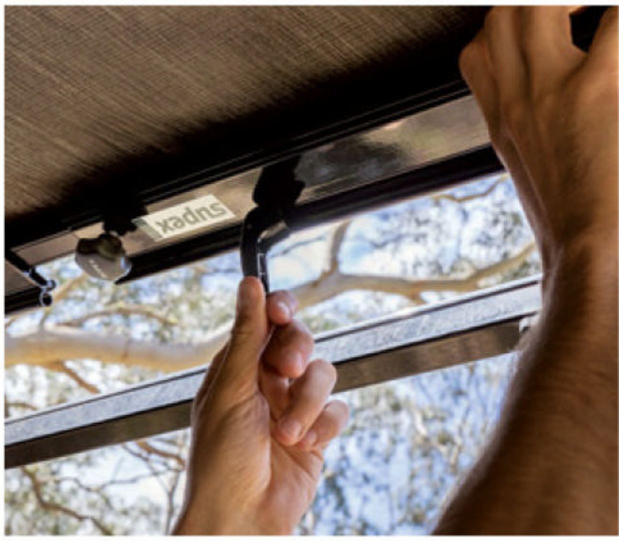
CREATE THE ULTIMATE AWNING SETUP WITH SUPEX

Awnings are an integral part of the caravanning and outdoor living experience, so to help protect your awning and enhance your setup, we spoke with the experts at Supex. **Words** Amelia Mansell, **Pics** Supplied



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Curved roof rafters support your awning; Caravan step; Stainless steel clothesline; The Secura Bar stops vinyl flapping; The Vibe light; Supex's Lightweight Table; Supex's new reclining chair and a caravan mat can help create the ultimate outdoor living space

Once a luxury, now a caravanning staple, awnings can transform your caravanning experience, providing much needed shade and extending your living areas. And in a country as beautiful as this, there are few things better than sitting under your awning with a cool drink in hand, dinner on the barbie and appreciating a good view.

Supex is a family-owned and operated business based in Goulburn, NSW, with a passion for designing high quality gear to enhance outdoor adventures. Founded in 1973 by Ron Kennard, the company is now three generations in and is as adventure-focused as ever. The team walks the talk, and they bring their first-hand experience and public feedback into every design, considering if any item they bring to the market will make the outdoor lifestyle easier and more enjoyable.

And one of the areas that Supex specialises in is awning accessories that are designed to prolong the life of the awning and enhance your overall camping experience.

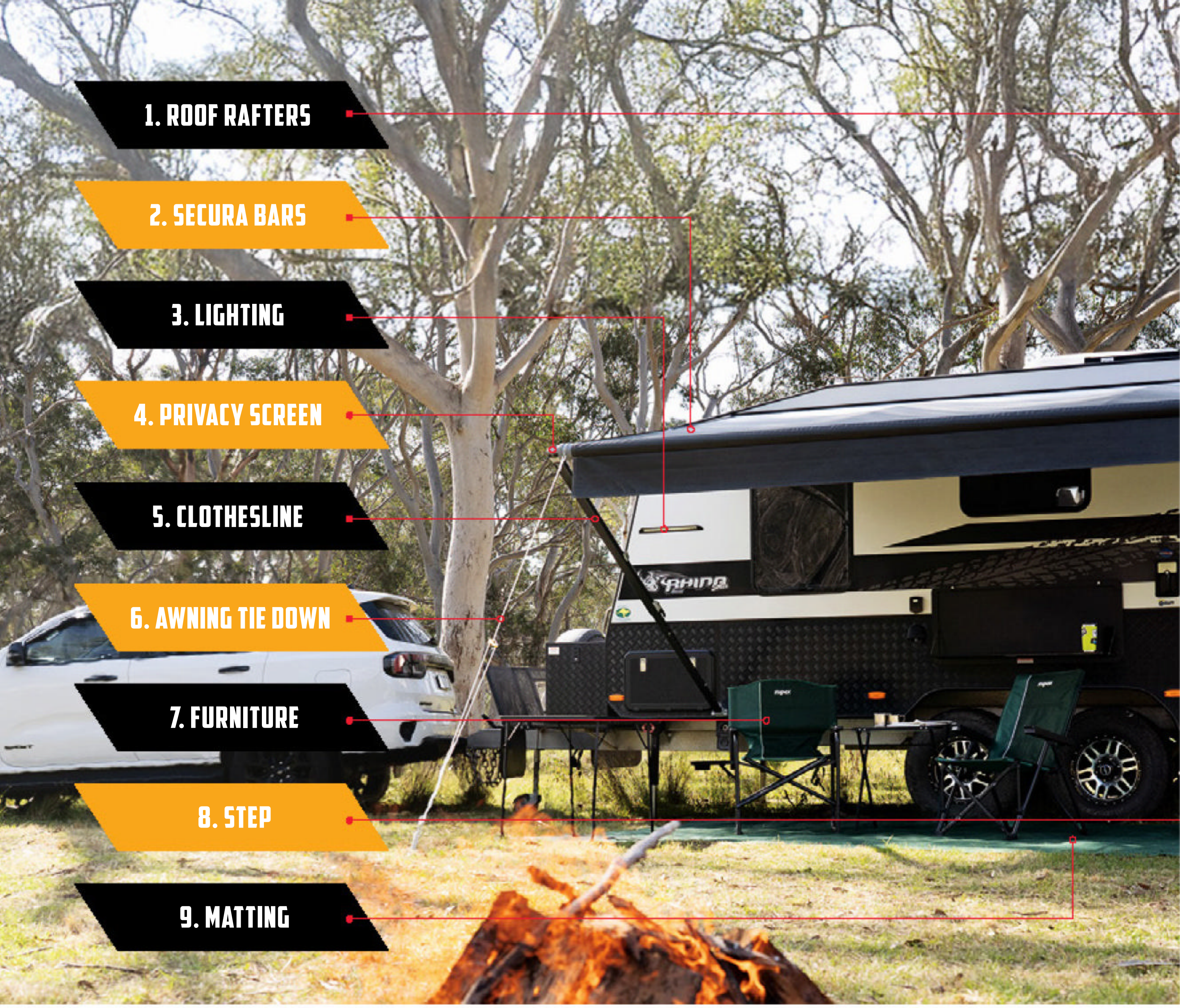
"We respect that awnings are an investment, so we provide add-on solutions to expand the lifetime of your awning and in the meantime improve the quality and experience of your adventure," the Supex team said.

"'The ultimate awning and annexe setup' – this is what we strive for when we roll into camp. Setting it up so everything is secured, comfortable and well lit. Putting in a little bit of extra effort into setting up your space makes for a much more pleasant camping experience."

And with more caravanners interested in extended stays off-grid, or heading to remote areas where the weather can get wild, having a well-equipped awning setup can make all the difference, ensuring comfort and protection no matter what the elements throw your way

THE ULTIMATE AWNING SETUP

To make things easy, we've created the following diagram showing how you can create the ideal awning setup around your van, with gear designed to protect and extend the longevity of your awning and to enhance your comfort.



TAKING CARE OF YOUR GEAR

All Supex products are designed to withstand Australia's harsh conditions and last a lifetime of adventures, but care and maintenance are still essential.

If possible, keep your gear dry. But if you can't, then make sure you wipe them down before putting them away.

If you're leaving camp, or packing up after a season of travel, then always store your gear in a lockable container.

Storing your gear in a bag is also a great way to keep things neat and protected. Bags are also very handy for keeping your curved awning roof rafters and Secura Bars organised – Supex sells a storage bag designed specifically for this purpose and can fit one Secura Bar Kit and two curved roof rafters.

SUPEX'S LATEST RELEASES

Supex is always looking for ways to improve the caravanning and outdoor living experience with new and practical gear. Some of its newest additions to the range – only being released this month – include the Reclining Hard Armchair (featured in the table to the right) and the Steel Directors Chair, which are both designed for comfort and stability. The Directors Chair is a new design for Supex, and is comfy, lightweight, easy to store and features a cup and phone holder on the side table.

Supex has also expanded its caravan lighting range with modern, hard-wired interior and exterior options, which are quickly becoming a fan-favourite in the Supex range. These lights are modern and stylish and can transform your indoor and outdoor setup and feature dimmable switches, flexible arms and multiple light modes.

For those hot summer nights, Supex has introduced interior 12V/24V caravan fans. Available in black or white, these fans come with a mounting kit for easy installation and can be operated manually or with a remote control. With three speed settings – low, medium and high – they provide quiet, energy-efficient airflow to keep your space comfortable.

GEAR THAT GOES THE DISTANCE

As a family-run business, Supex prides itself on being able to genuinely connect with its customers and offer help when it is needed. Whether you're looking for the nearest stockist, need advice on the best gear for your setup or want to discuss whether or not a product can be customised to your needs, the team is always happy to help.

Every Supex product comes with a standard warranty, but for extra peace of

mind, select items – such as tarps and privacy screens – come with an extended four-year warranty. It's all part of Supex's commitment to quality and making sure customers get the most out of their gear.

Whether you're setting up for a weekend escape or a long-haul caravanning adventure, having the right equipment for your awning setup can make all the difference. The Supex team is made up of outdoor adventurers who know the lifestyle and are dedicated to designing gear with real-world usability, ease and comfort in mind. And with more than 50 years of experience in the gear game, they know what works and how to ensure that their gear can handle the demands of Aussie adventures. Find out more online: supex.com.au

1. CURVED AWNING ROOF RAFTERS	Designed to support your awning and stop water pooling and flapping, two of the common ways awnings get damaged. Supex has four variations: white or black with an acute or slight curve. The number of rafters you need depends on the length of your awning.
2. SECURA BARS (ANTI-FLAP KIT)	The Supex Secura Bar attaches to the sides of the awning fabric and provides stability and prevents flapping in bad weather. It is available in black or white and in three sizes (small, medium and large).
3. LIGHTING	Lighting can really transform your outdoor space. Supex's newly released exterior **Dual Colour Awning Lights** are available in black or white and 225mm or 550mm and have cool white and amber white to keep the bugs away. These lights add ambiance and makes evenings and winter camping much more enjoyable – and being installed on your awning means you won't be tripping over them! **Vibe Light:** If you love hosting parties or just want a fun light option, then the Vibe Light is a must. This small light can transform your outdoor area, and kids love them. **The Versa Light:** These portable/magnetic lights are ideal for lighting up under your chassis or in your gear tunnel boot. **Rechargeable Camping Light:** This is a four-winged multipurpose bit of gear that you can position wherever suits you — including hanging from your curved awning rafters to add a cool atmosphere to your home away from home.
4. PRIVACY SCREEN	**Long wall:** Available in grey or black and also available in a bonus drop, which has a longer drop for more privacy for offroad vans. **End wall:** Available in the same options as above. **Porch extension kit:** This is the Supex team's favourite because it creates a really nice extension to your outdoor area and adds privacy without feeling cramped in, and the Velcro and Kedar splines along the top make it easy to attach to your awning arms.
5. STAINLESS STEEL CLOTHESLINE	This space-saving clothesline is designed to hang between the supporting arms of your awning. There is a range of sizes available to fit 8ft to 25ft awnings.
6. AWNING TIE DOWN	This is an essential bit of gear when it comes to awning protection. The kit includes two guy ropes, two awning rope clips and two tent pegs. The kit is designed to tie and hold your awning stable, protecting it against movement in windy conditions. A simple tool for a lot of safety.
7. BEST FURNITURE FOR UNDER THE AWNING	Supex's iconic soft and comfortable **Reclining Hard Armchair** is a must — there's a new and updated version is coming this month! Features: • Reclining, with a high back so you've got a head rest — a necessity when relaxing at camp • Hard arms for upright comfort • Completely collapsible • Fits into carry bag with shoulder strap • Expandable cup holder and phone holder pocket — always have a safe and easily accessed spot to put your things • Weight rating: 120kg • Product weight: 6.5kg Pair the chair with **Supex's classic Hoop Leg camping stool**, which can serve as a footrest. **Supex's Lightweight Table** rounds out the outdoor living area and makes for the perfect relaxation station. It's easy to store and carry and offers plenty of table space for eating or working on the road.
8. CARAVAN STEP	Supex supplies a range of single, double, foldable (for fixed installation), adjustable, plastic and metal caravan steps. Here are some favourites: **Single:** At 22cm high, this step is ideal if the rise between the ground and the van isn't high. Available in silver and black. **Double:** Great for higher vans, this double step is 38cm high and is available in black or silver. (Both the single and double steps are available in metal and some in aluminium) **Plastic:** A lightweight, portable option. **Adjustable:** This is a single step but has adjustable height legs (four different stages).
9. MATTING	**PVC foam carpet:** Highly popular because it's soft underfoot and premium quality. Available in green, blue or grey. Water, dirt and sand draining. **Mesh ground matting:** The mesh style allows grass to grow underneath and sand and dirt to filter through. It is also UV stabilised and can double as a shade cloth and has reinforced eyelets so you can screw it down (Supex also sells screw-in mat pegs). Both mats include carry bags.

For more information on the products and handy installation guides, head to the Supex website: supex.com.au

The Supex range — which also includes products such as bedding (such as self-inflating mattresses, stretchers), cast-iron cookware, trailer hardware, gazebos — is available direct to customers on the website or through trusted retailers across Australia and New Zealand.

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ABOVE AND RIGHT Signature Camper Trailers at the first OnlyVans.com.au Round Up; Bird's eye view of the Round Up on Rosedale Estate, Qld

THE FIRST ONLYVANS.COM.AU ROUND UP

OnlyVans.com.au's inaugural Caravan and Camper Excellence Round Up in November 2024 saw 15 of Australia's leading caravans and campers come together at Queensland's Rosedale Estate for photos, 4WD tests and campfire camaraderie.

***Words** Wayne Park **Pics** Supplied*

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ABOVE The attendees were able to relax and tour each other's setups

An hour from Brisbane, in the hinterland just beyond the Glass House Mountains, sits Rosedale Estate, approximately 31 hectares of green hills and wooded valleys. Here, only a short drive from the small country town of D'Aguliar, visitors can enjoy a tranquil stay with parrots flitting and fighting through the treetops and deer grazing peacefully in the roadside paddocks.

This was the setting of OnlyVans.com.au's first Caravan and Camper Excellence Round Up, where for two days representatives from some of Australia's leading caravan manufacturers would show off their latest models. Attendees included Green RV (representing Snowy River Caravans and Prime Edge Caravans), Rembrandt Caravans, Hardkorr Campers, Oz Star Caravans, Trackabout Off-Road Campers, Signature Camper Trailers, Jawa Off Road Campers, MDC Camper Trailers and Vision RV.

The campsite for the Caravan and Camper Excellence Round Up was a lush grass terrace on the banks above Delaneys Creek, closed to the public for the duration of the event, and close enough to the water to hear the resident frogs start their chorus as the afternoon heat died away.

Many of the attendees were familiar with one another, all of them regulars on the gruelling, months-long schedule of trade shows and field days that see them criss-crossing the country. But in events like this familiarity gives way to friendship and for two days they are not competitors but colleagues, peers and above all else, fellow campers.

Around the campfire, the conversation quickly turned towards trip reports and the sharing of fishing spots, and after a while, the inevitable rig rundown took place: who's towing what, where did they take it and, most importantly, how did it hold up? Campers and caravans were set up, pop-tops and slide-outs were extended, and everyone was content to spend the next few hours touring each other's setups and talking shop.

This laid-back atmosphere was a constant throughout the two-day stay at Rosedale Estate, and although the attendees were all competitors, the event was not a competition. All manufacturers are members of OnlyVans.com.au's dealer network, and while there was a clear focus on offroad models, the real uniting factor between the brands is excellence in many different categories.

When asked about the event's genesis, event organiser and Only Sales CEO, Michael Rojek, said, "It's about getting industry leaders together and giving them an opportunity to talk about their products ... and showcase why the market considers them to be industry leaders."

"We're also about trying to give back to the dealer network as well and not be an award that pits everyone against each other to try and say that your one particular product is better," says Jerry Hughes of Credit One, another of the event organisers.

Day one saw everyone gathering around the remains of the campfire ready for a content shoot organised by OnlyVans.com.au. After a week of heavy rain, the sky was blue and cloudless and the group split off for the respective halves of the shoot.

At the summit of the nearby hill, each van was photographed and filmed against a beautiful backdrop of valleys and distant mountain ranges, followed by an interview to talk about what each attendee brought with them.

And what was on display was some of the industry's most innovative models, from compact camper trailers to large, dual-axle caravans. Despite the diversity, everyone shared one similarity: passion for the industry.

These brands and the people behind them live and breathe the outdoors, and for many, their entry into the industry came on the back of years, even decades, spent as customers, enthusiasts and adventurers. They know their product, they know what customers need, and that is what allows them to find success, even at a time when the industry as a whole has slowed down.

As the sun set, all 15 models were back at the campsite to set up once more for a scenic evening photoshoot.

A creek crossing was scheduled to kick off day two, which gave everyone a final chance to put their models to the test in front of the cameras. It was also the chance to win bragging rights, with many eyeing the steep, chewed-up bank next to the 'official' crossing point. Over the course of an hour the V8 engines of the tow vehicles were put to work while the group gathered on the banks to see what the vans and campers were capable of.

The final car clearing the mud marked the end to a successful two-day event, and everyone packed up and headed their separate ways, and the valley soon filled with double-beep car horns to bid farewell as the 15 cars snaked their way down the single-lane road out of Rosedale Estate.

For more information, and to explore all the brands and models that were present at the 2024 Caravan and Camper Excellence Round Up, visit www.onlyvans.com.au.

> "This laid-back atmosphere was a constant throughout the two-day stay at Rosedale Estate, *and although the attendees were all competitors, the event was not a competition*"

ABOVE AND BELOW There was a great range of caravans and camper trailers from leading Aussie manufacturers; The Hardkorr Xplorer camper trailer

MAIN View to East Mount Barren, Fitzgerald River National Park (Image Tourism WA)

WA'S OTHER COASTAL ADVENTURE

Julia travels along the Fitzgerald Biosphere Coast to discover more of Western Australia's underrated coastal stretch.

Words **JULIA D'ORAZIO**
Pics **JULIA D'ORAZIO AND SUPPLIED**

"The coastal hinterland claims UNESCO status as a Biosphere Reserve, one of the world's most botanically blessed regions"

ABOVE AND BELOW Overlooking Mylies Beach from East Mount Barren; Views of Hamersley Road and the Barrens Regelia wildflower in the foreground (Images Tourism WA)

Tell anyone you're travelling along Western Australia's coast, and you'll probably visualise Indian Ocean sunsets and diving into Ningaloo Reef to explore its colourful universe and microscopic wonders. But Ningaloo isn't the state's only coastal stretch boastful of a vivid ecosystem.

This time, I'm keeping my head above water and journeying to WA's south to explore the Fitzgerald Biosphere Coast, 500km southeast of Perth. And like Ningaloo, the Fitzgerald Biosphere Coast is home to vibrant, bountiful and diverse macro-organisms.

The Fitzgerald Biosphere Coast encompasses Fitzgerald River National Park, which extends almost 330,000ha and is one of the largest national parks in the country.

The coastal hinterland claims UNESCO status as a Biosphere Reserve, one of the world's most botanically blessed regions. More than 1800 flora species flourish in its fertile grounds, making up nearly 20 per cent of the state's plant species, and there are approximately 200 different bird species in the area. The park's beaches are a mix of pristine and rough. Rugged peaks tower over rare growths adjacent to the Southern Ocean. There's a lot to take in.

Besides literally smelling the flowers by the sea, my partner and I went on an adventure to the regional towns of Bremer Bay, Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe, all located on Fitzgerald River National Park's doorstep. And they, too, have plenty of wonders to explore.

FEELING ALIVE IN A SLEEPY TOWN

We began our southern coastal adventure in Bremer Bay, 505km southeast of Perth. The sleepy town borders Fitzgerald River National Park, 40km from the entry point.

Hardly known as a lively place, the holiday town with a population of around 210 is known for its natural assets: dramatic bluffs, turquoise beaches, secluded coves and rare flora. Lurking in Bremer Bay's greater waters are its famed residents: orcas (killer whales).

Unlike Ningaloo's friendlier whales, these apex predator whales are a mission to get to, found 70km off the town's coast in Bremer Bay Canyon. Filmmaker David Riggs discovered the orca hotspot two decades ago after sensing predatory behaviour in the area. The area boasts one of the biggest seasonal orca whale populations in the Southern Hemisphere, the canyon plunging up to 1km in depth along Australia's continental shelf. For those brave enough to endure turbulent seas, full-day expeditions to the underwater landmark cost $399 per person and run from December to April.

Unfortunately, we were visiting in late November, so no whale watching for us. Instead, we occupied our time elsewhere: swimming in Little Boat Beach Harbour, a sheltered bay and popular snorkel and dive spot; watching the sun set along coastal granite bluffs; trying local craft beers at nautical-themed Bremer Bay Brewing Co, the most happening place in town; and testing the glutes walking up Tooreburrup Hill Lookout to appreciate 360-degree views of Bremer Bay.

We called Bremer Bay Beaches Resort Tourist and Caravan Park home during our stay, and it was a great spot to rest after active days. Although it's a short drive from the town's eight beaches, the caravan park is an enclave of green dotted with peppermint trees throughout and surrounded by forest. There are more than 100 shaded caravan sites, including five ensuite sites (up to 22 feet long), unpowered sites (up to 30 feet long) and powered sites (up to 40 feet long) with three ablution blocks in between. While the park receives Telstra reception, it also offers designated areas that accommodate satellites.

ABOVE The lookout at Cave Point

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Coastal scenery at Quoin Head (Image Tourism WA); Artwork on the Farm Gate Trail; There are 32 sculptures along the route

A FEW DAYS IN THE PARK

Before we headed off to the towns Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun, we explored what fills the gap in between: Fitzgerald River National Park.

I had previously visited the park in spring, when wildflowers appear like natural confetti. Despite the park not being at its boldest in late November, it was still a wonderland to roam outside peak bloom. The park's winding roads are flecked with royal hakea – growing up to 3m tall, the sentinel-like shrub's flowers may be small, but its foliage is a mix of orange, yellow and green. Simply striking.

Our springboard for adventures was Hamersley Inlet Campground, located within the park and managed by the Shire of Ravensthorpe. The tranquil cove straddles between coastal headlands and dramatic ranges and reminded me of mountainous vistas in the UK and Canada, the grey skies adding to the effect. The campground features 14 tiered gravel sites suited for caravans, a basic camp kitchen and two drop toilet facilities just moments from the inlet banks. As Telstra reception is not within range, there is a Starlink with access to free wi-fi.

From here, the campground is moments from hiking trails: a short walk to Hamersley Beach (1.1km); Hamersley Inlet Trail (1.7km); and for those yearning for a longer leg stretch, Hakea Trail (23.5km). As the latter, we tackled a short section of the Hakea Walk Trail around West Beach. Jumbles of grey, shimmering rock – many with a splash of oxidisation – stick out from the beach sand like glass shards. It is a unique part of the coastline to wander around battered formations.

A trek that is easy on the legs is Point Ann Heritage Trail. The 1.5km coastal trek along the park's eastern edge features remnants of the century-old rabbit-proof fence made famous by the *Rabbit-Proof Fence* 2002 film highlighting the plight of the Stolen Generation. Along the way, there is a designated platform for watching humpback whales in season. (Hot tip: I recommend downloading the AllTrails app for hiking trail information as reception is limited in the park.)

Heading further east, Cave Point is a remarkable pit stop to grasp the rawness and splendour of the Fitzgerald Coast. A viewing platform is partly suspended over the cliffs; the pounding of waves is unrelenting. But once you can get past the might of the ocean's roar, the views are expansive and include East Mount Barren. The quartzite peak rises up out of the landscape like an armchair sculptured for giants, overlooking the sea.

“Locals have exercised their creative flair with discarded scrap metals to create 32 farm-inspired sculptures along a 250km route”

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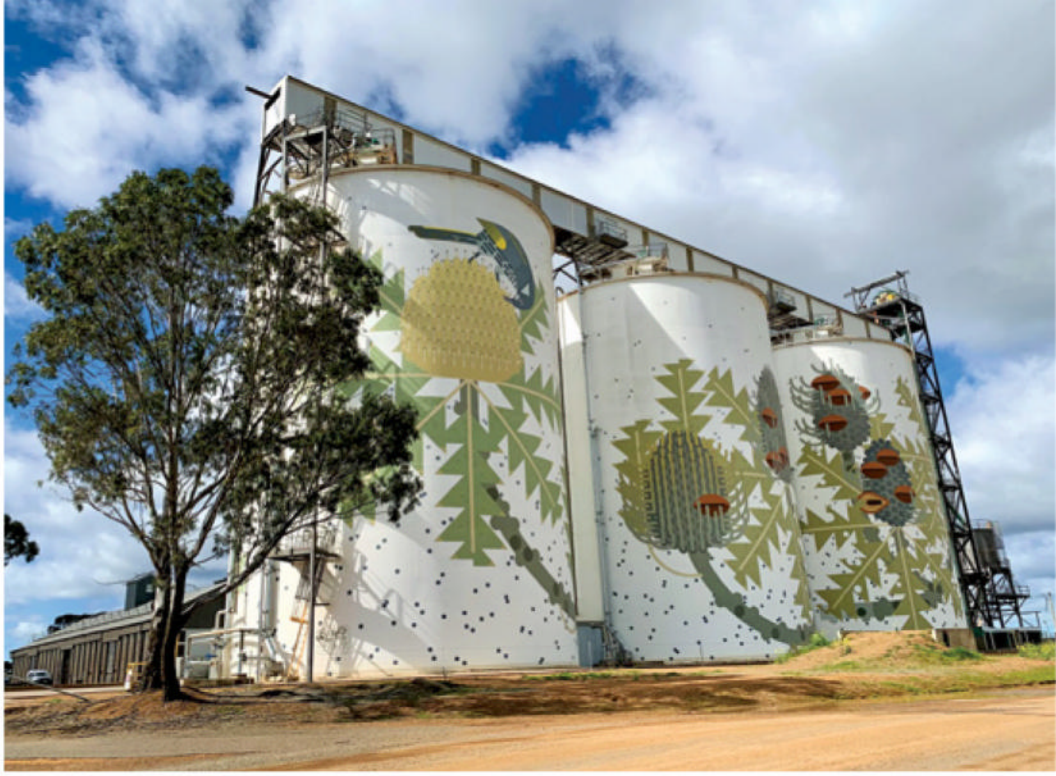


BEYOND THE WILDFLOWERS

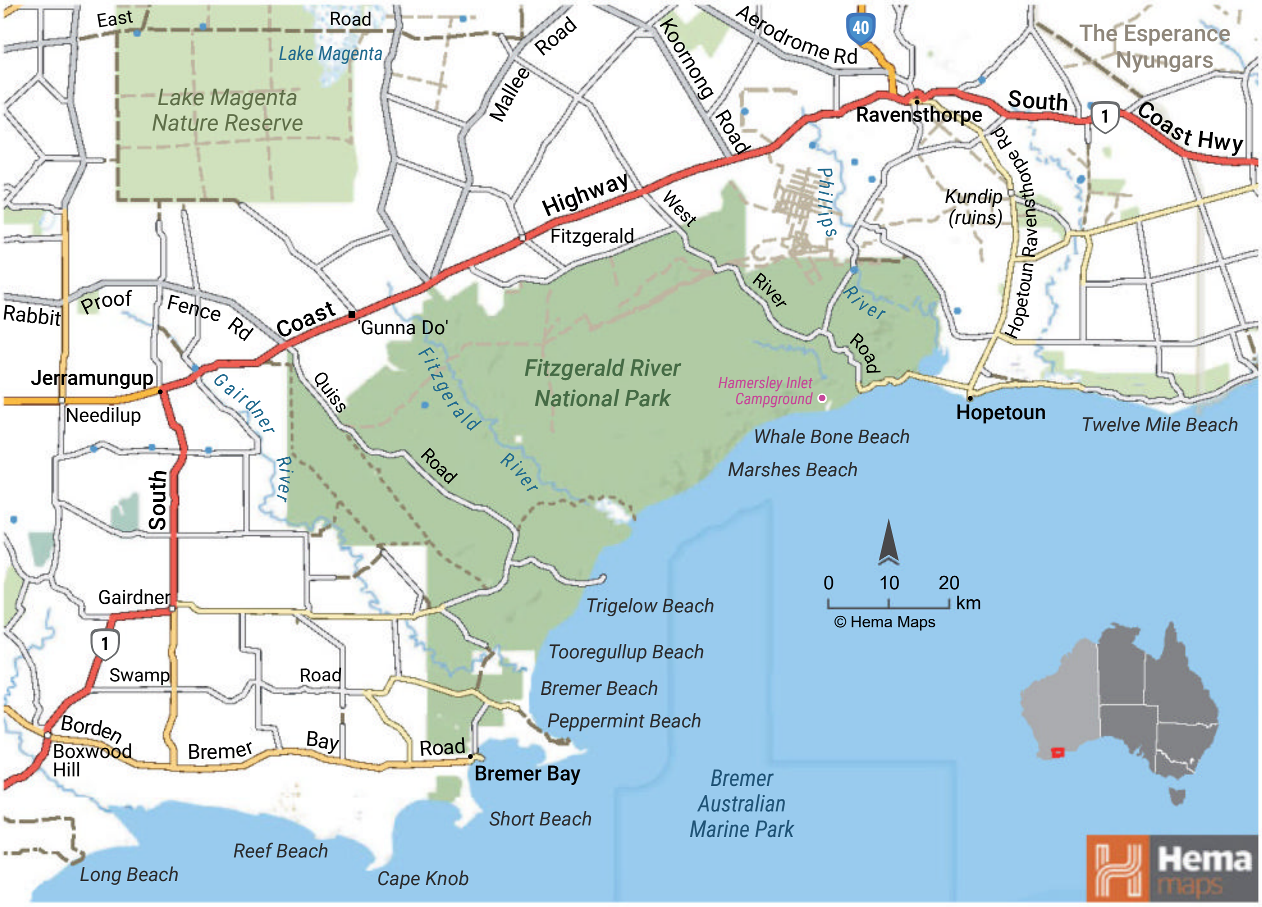
Even though we were not visiting in bloom season, splashes of colour can be found all year round in Ravensthorpe, 200km northeast of Bremer Bay.

Besides mining, Ravensthorpe is known for being a eucalyptus epicentre, home to 100 species and around 50 hybrids. The town's other claim to fame is being home to three 25m-high silos that showcase the six growth stages of regional native Banksia baxteri, a particular species that is native to Western Australia. The sky-high murals by Fremantle-based Dutch artist Amok Island are part of the state's largest outdoor art gallery, the PUBLIC Silo Trail (seven artworks in total).

At a grassroots level, there is the Farm Gate Art Trail. Locals have exercised their creative flair with discarded scrap metals to create 32 farm-inspired sculptures along a 250km route. A few were on our path, including a colossal kettle made of a small silo and decorated with colourful flower stencils. Most impressively, its sprout is an old satellite.

On the outskirts of town is Ravensthorpe Range, a 40km stretch of low hills. We hit the dirt roads to travel to Archer Drive Lookout, 14km from the town centre. It was an exciting drive and gave us plenty of opportunities to soak up the scenery from easy elevation, and, if you're inclined, to get closer to more endemic plant species.

"The sky-high murals by Fremantle-based Dutch artist Amok Island are part of the state's largest outdoor art gallery, the PUBLIC Silo Trail (seven artworks in total)"


East Road
Lake Magenta
Lake Magenta Nature Reserve
Mallee Road
Koornong Road
Aerodrome Rd
40
The Esperance Nyungars
Ravensthorpe
South Coast Hwy
1
Phillips
Kundip (ruins)
Hopetoun Ravensthorpe Rd
Highway
West River Road
Fitzgerald
Rabbit Proof Fence Rd
Coast
'Gunna Do'
Jerramungup
Needilup
Gairdner River
Quiss Road
Fitzgerald River
Fitzgerald River National Park
Hamersley Inlet Campground
River
Hopetoun
Twelve Mile Beach
Whale Bone Beach
Marshes Beach
South
Gairdner
Swamp Road
Trigelow Beach
Tooregullup Beach
Bremer Beach
Peppermint Beach
Borden
Boxwood Hill
Bremer Bay Road
Bremer Bay
Short Beach
Bremer Australian Marine Park
Reef Beach
Long Beach
Cape Knob
0 10 20 km
© Hema Maps
Hema maps

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Fitzgerald River National Park; Banksia; Silo art showing the six growth stages of regional native Banksia baxteri

FAST FACTS

WHERE TO STAY

Fitzgerald River Biosphere Coast
P: 08 9838 1191
E: tourism@ravensthrope.com.au
W: fitzgeraldcoast.com.au

Fitzgerald River National Park
Park entry fees apply: $17 per vehicle for a standard vehicle, or valid park passes cover the park entry fees. A five-day holiday park pass is $30.
P: 08 9842 4500
W: exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/fitzgerald-river-national-park

Bremer Bay Beaches Resort Tourist and Caravan Park
P: 08 9837 4290
E: frontoffice@bremerbaybeaches.com.au
W: bremerbaybeaches.com.au

Naturaliste Charters Whale Watching and Killer Whale Expeditions
P: 08 9750 5500
E: info@whales-australia.com.au
W: naturalistecharters.com.au

Fitzgerald Biosphere Coast WA (to book Hamersley Inlet Campground)
P: 08 9838 1191
E: tourism@ravensthorpe.wa.gov.au
W: fitzgeraldcoast.com.au

EVENTS TO ADD TO YOUR CALENDAR

Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show and Spring Festival: 8–20 September 2025
See Ravensthorpe in full bloom at the annual Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show. Since 1982, the fair has showcased the region's floral diversity alongside a myriad of regional activities.
W: wildflowersravensthorpe.org.au

Hopetoun Annual Fishing Classic: 28 February to 2 March 2026
Local sports group Southerners Sporting Club Hopetoun hosts the annual fishing event every Labour Day long weekend in March.

"The tranquil cove straddles between coastal headlands and dramatic ranges"

HOP TO IT

Heading 47km south of Ravensthorpe is Hopetoun. The waterfront town features a small shopping strip, including an IGA. Accommodation is also easy on the wallet, with the Hopetoun 48 Hour RV Rest Area located along the Esplanade (you must be self-sufficient and always abide by the rules and restrictions). Potable water is usually available at Hopetoun Groyne and there's a dump point opposite Wavecrest Village & Tourist Park.

Known as a top fishing spot, Hopetoun is the gateway to the Southern Ocean Road with beaches galore: 2 Mile, 5 Mile, 12 Mile and Mason Bay. 2 Mile Beach is the most convenient, around 3.5km east of the RV rest area. If tempted to return to the wilderness, Fitzgerald River National Park is just a 10-minute drive away. This part of the coast is highly rated.

ABOVE AND BELOW Hamersley Inlet; The camp kitchen at the Hamersley Inlet Campground (Images Dene Bingham)

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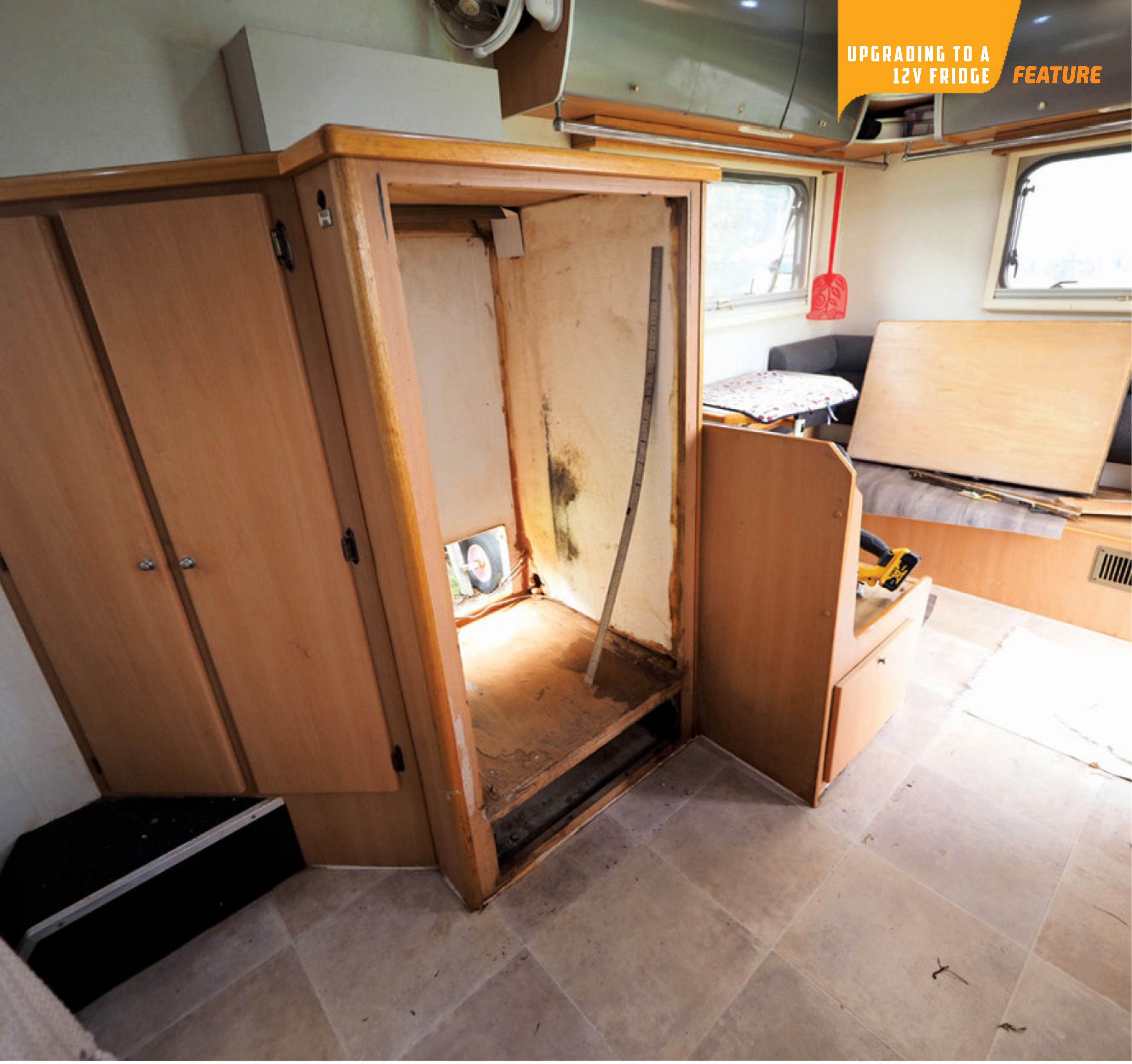
UPGRADING TO A 12V FRIDGE FROM GAS

When his old three-way fridge packed it in, Editor John Ford settled on a Bushman 190L compressor fridge for his next travelling adventure in the Trakmaster.

Words and Pics *John Ford*

ABOVE After thousands of kilometres on rough roads, it was finally time for John to upgrade the fridge in his Trakmaster



ABOVE The cabinet space left vacant by the old 150L fridge

Those who follow our travels may recall that the rough tracks of the Kimberley took a toll on our gas fridge last year. When we stopped for lunch one afternoon, a strong ammonia smell clearly showed the coolant had sprung a leak.

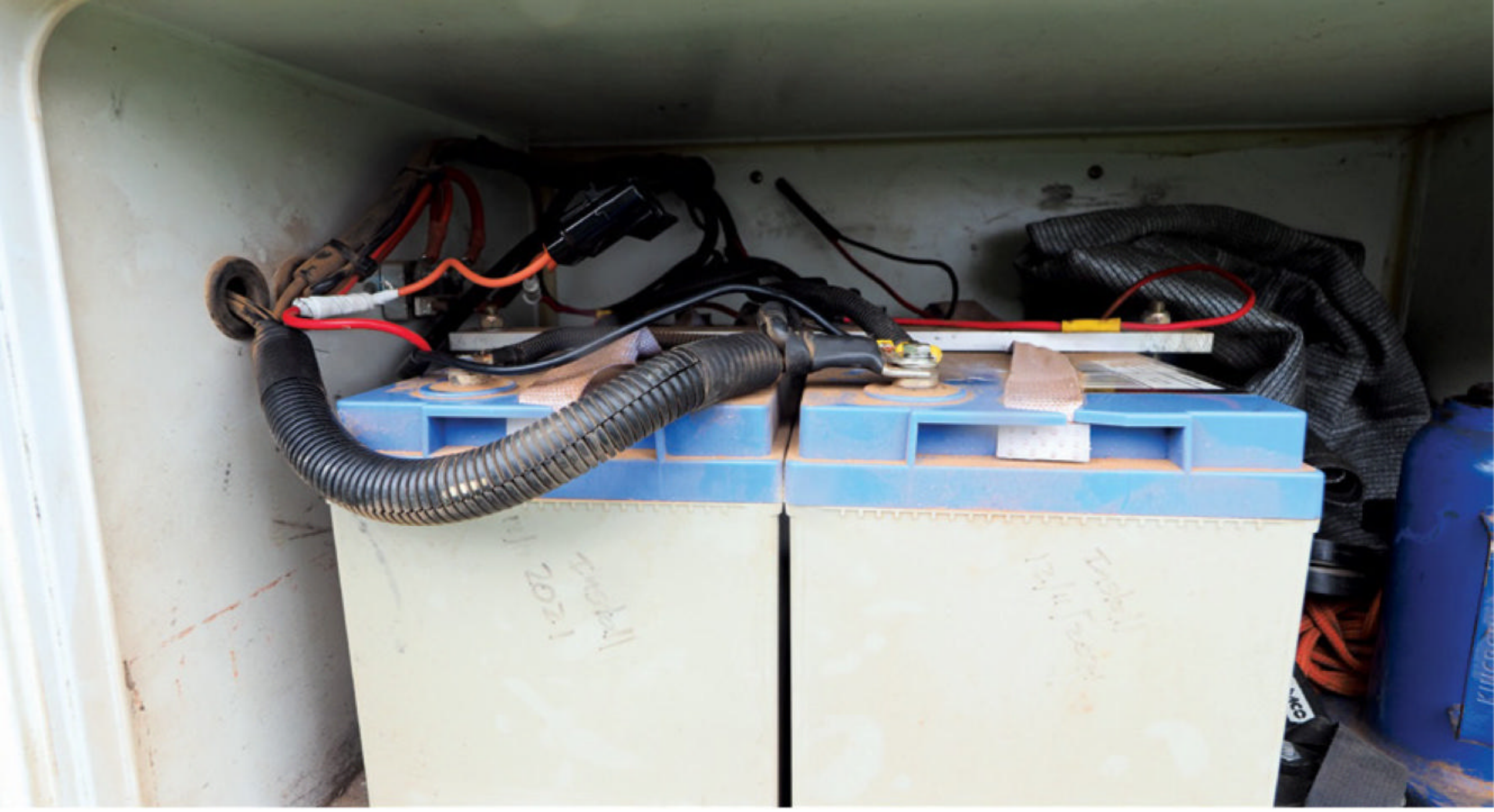
This had also happened about 18 months previously, and we had the cooling unit replaced, so it looked like it was time for a new fridge.

We managed without the fridge until we got home, but the time was ripe for a replacement, and we decided a 12V fridge was the best option. Replacements in the same size as the old 150L Dometic three-way fridge were few and far between, and it was looking like fitting a new compressor fridge into the Trakmaster's cupboard space wouldn't be as straightforward as I hoped.

However, our research found high praise for the reliability of Bushman fridges from suppliers and many owners. The Bushman 190L fridge/freezer fits the width and depth of the existing cabinet, but it's about 200mm higher. Some serious cabinet surgery would be required.

Before settling on the 190L Bushman, I called the Bushman team to check on the fridge, explaining that we cover some rough miles and need something reliable. Without huge amounts of battery power, it had to be efficient as well.

I learned that Bushman is an Australian family business which has been supplying fridges for mobile applications since the mid-1980s. It specialises in fridges ranging from small chest and drawer units to the 190L we had in mind. Bushman designs its own cooling units and uses the same trouble-free Danfoss/Secop compressor throughout the model run. It prides itself on fridges with no frills. They don't have gadgets like wi-fi and Bluetooth and only run on 12V, so there are minimal electronics to cause problems.



ABOVE AND BELOW The connection to the batteries; Cutting the top of the cabinet

HOW THEY WORK

Our old three-way absorption fridge operated on LPG, 12V and 240V power, achieving its cooling by heating a mixture of water, ammonia and hydrogen. This mixture cools quickly when converted to gas, which then flows through a cooling web to absorb heat inside the fridge before condensing back into a liquid and being recycled.

A compressor fridge also relies on evaporating a liquid to a gas to supply the cooling, but it converts the gas to a liquid by compression rather than heat. The advantage of the compressor is that it can operate at angles up to 30 degrees and is less susceptible to vibration or keeping the gas alight. So, they are better in an offroad van. When connected to a solar-powered battery, the power supply is renewable and cheaper.

THE INSTALLATION

The thought of cutting up a perfectly good cabinet in the van was somewhat daunting, so I stared at the cabinetry for a good while, trying to imagine what it could look like with a bigger fridge in place. The Trakmaster build is sturdy and well-finished, so I was keen to maintain the look as much as possible and tie everything together so it would handle the movement and vibrations. With some rough drawings completed, we began.

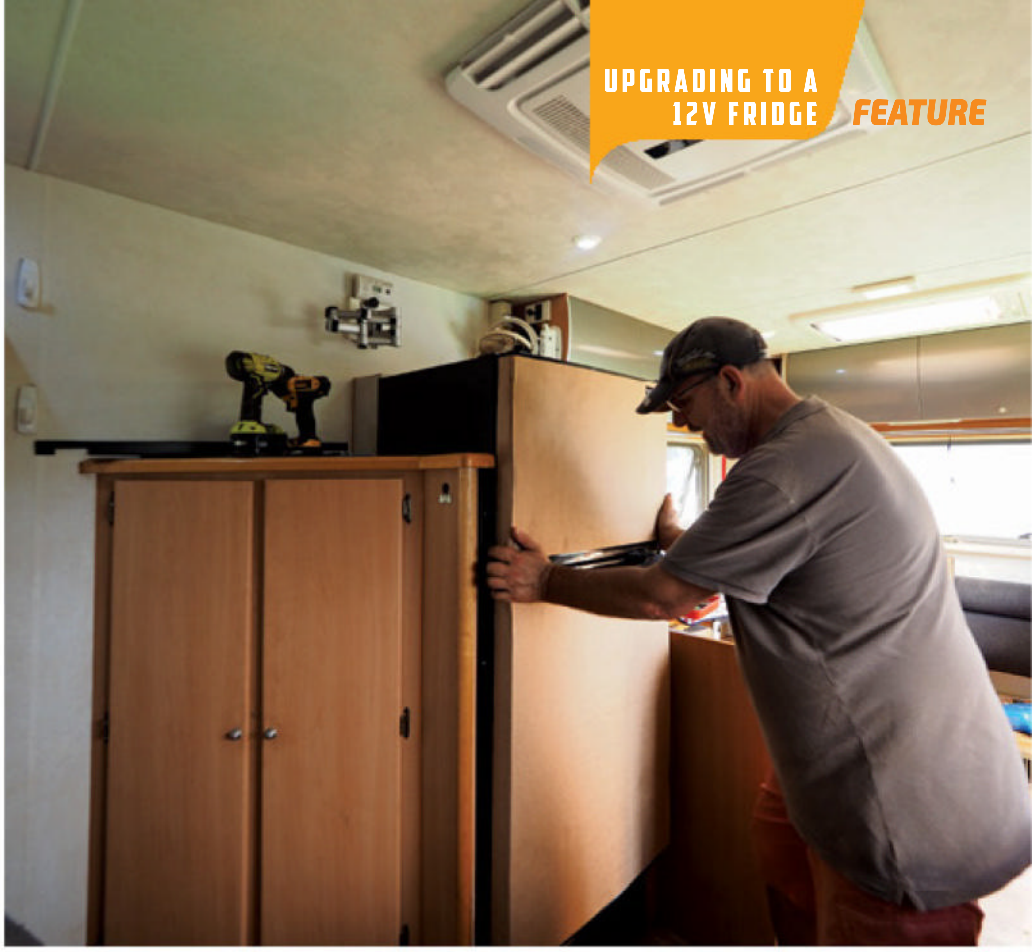
Before cutting the fridge cabinet, I assembled the parts I needed to complete the new cabinet and electrical installation. This included a sheet of 12mm ply, a length of 25mm square trim, glue and silicone tubes, five metres of twin-core 6mm electrical lead and covering conduit, a 20A fuse holder and suitable electrical connectors and screws.

Removing the old fridge was quite straightforward. After removing the retaining screws from the back through the wide vents, we pushed the fridge forward so we could unscrew some bottom plates secured to the floor. Once it was out of the way – with the help of my friend and fellow Trakmaster owner Steve – we cut the top of the fridge cabinet using a circular saw, carefully following the lines of the cabinet.

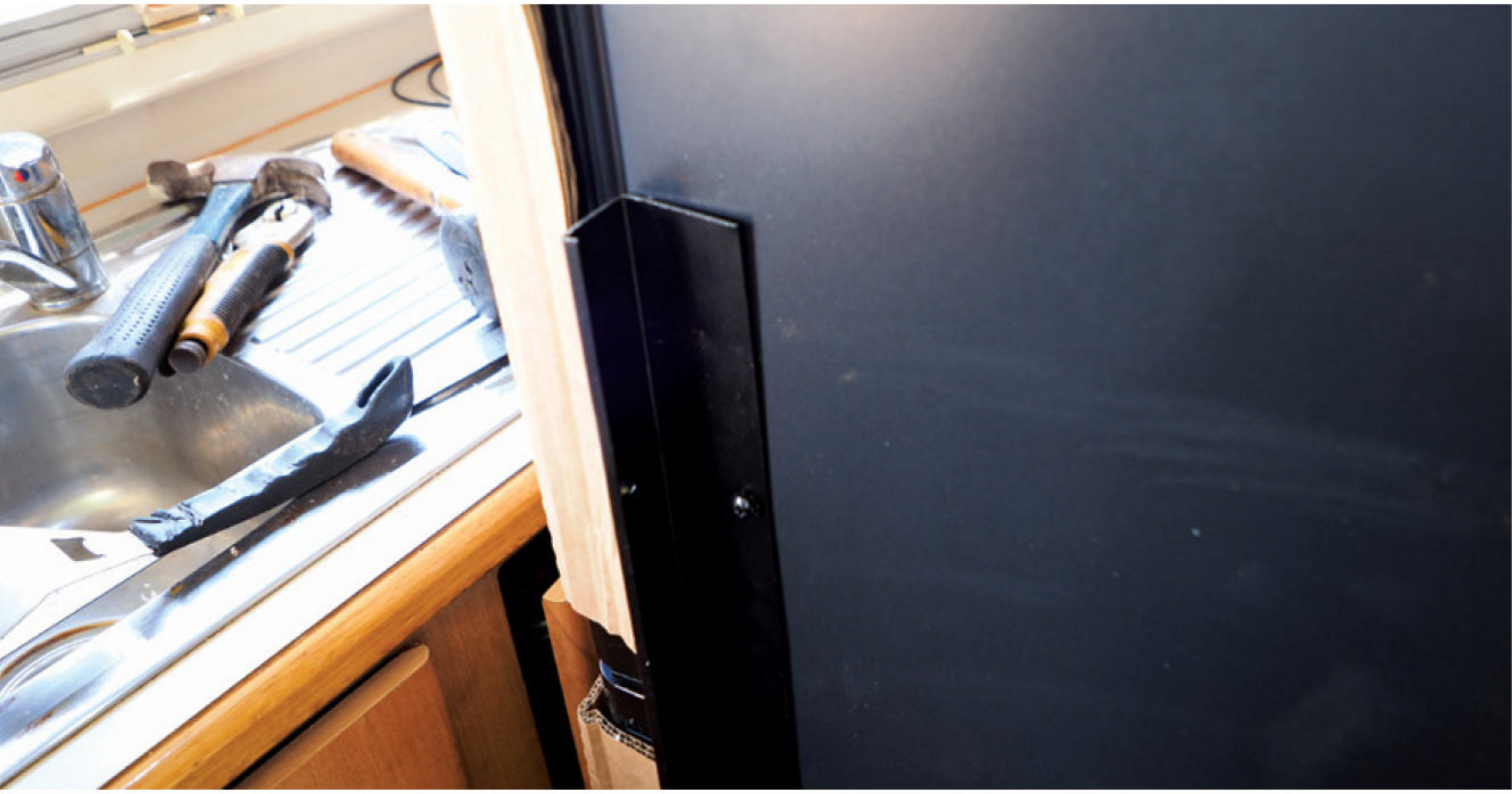
We then used a reciprocating saw to cut along the wall and remove the top.

The new fridge requires a good flow of fresh air behind it to dissipate the heat and thankfully the ventilation requirement was the same as the gas fridge, apart from a couple of new holes higher up in the cupboard. Happily, the van already had a 12V extractor fan and an external cover for hot days.

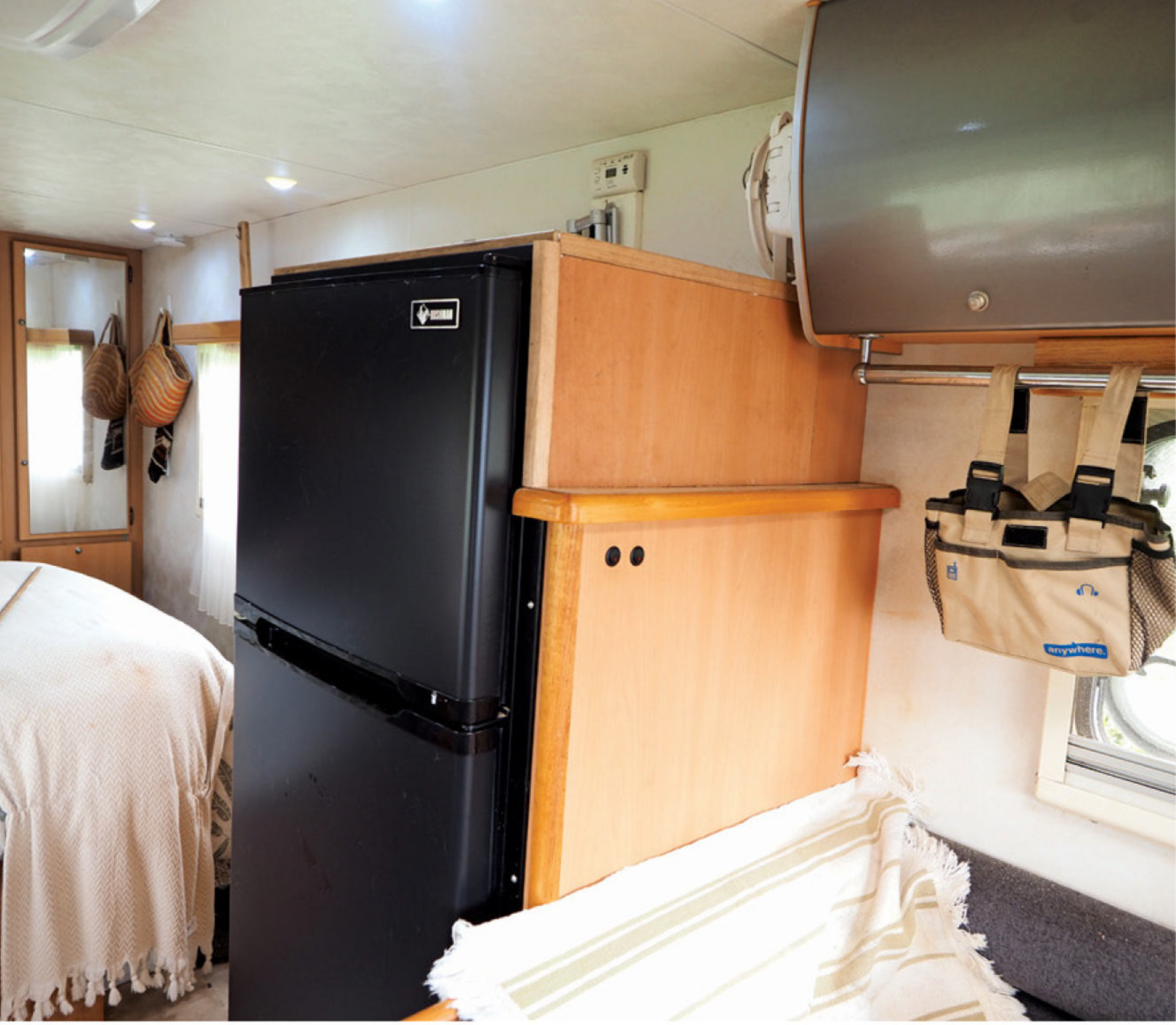
Getting the Bushman into the van was a two-person task, but it fitted into the door snugly, and we soon had it wedged into its slot in the cupboard. Sheet metal fascias, which came with the fridge, screw into predrilled holes on the side and then to the cabinet to keep the fridge secure.



> "With the help of my friend and fellow Trakmaster owner Steve — we cut the top of the fridge cabinet using a circular saw, ***carefully following the lines of the cabinet***"



ABOVE AND BELOW Setting the new fridge in place; Fitting the brackets



ABOVE The new fridge is secure

> *"Bushman recommends having at least a 240A AGM battery supply* and a 400W solar panel to run the fridge successfully"

The next task was to wire the fridge into the van's batteries. We ran the fridge's Anderson plug through a slot in the cabinet to the storage space under the lounge and fitted a receiver Anderson plug to our length of 6mm twin core wire, which we then ran through the floor and under the van and up through the floor again to the battery compartment. We shrouded the wires with conduit, ensured they were secure and sealed the floor holes to eliminate dust. With the fridge connected to the batteries through a 20A fuse, we connected the power through the Anderson plug to check that everything was working properly.

Our final task was to make a cover for the cabinet. Because of the external vent openings, I had to seal the back of the fridge from any dust entering the vents. I should note that, although it's not Bushman's preferred method, it's possible to install the fridge with internal venting, but because the back of our fridge sits on the wheel arch, there wasn't enough air space under it without lifting it another 50mm higher, which I wasn't keen to do. I also liked the way that Trakmaster originally mounted the fridge, and I was keen to follow its example to ensure it would stay securely in place.

Fabricating the cabinet top was a bit tricky as the original cabinet wasn't perfectly square to the wall after thousands of kilometres over corrugated roads. Nevertheless, after a couple of attempts, the top and sides fitted properly, and I trimmed the edges out with some 25mm square hardwood moulding. I saved the front panel from the old fridge, which matched the Trakmaster cabinets, to cover the sides so that the cabinet looked more original.

ABOVE AND BELOW Fitting the side panel; The new fridge is much bigger

QUIET RUNNING

Before we installed the top cover, I could hear the fridge running with a quiet gurgle now and then as the liquid coursed through the internals. But once we sealed the cover with silicone, it became almost silent. Although we haven't yet slept in the van since the new fridge was installed, I sat in there one evening reading for a couple of hours, and there was only a faint occasional hum from the compressor.

Bushman recommends having at least a 240A AGM battery supply and a 400W solar panel to run the fridge successfully. It uses a maximum of 4A when the compressor is running and an average of 2A over a day. We have been running the fridge for two weeks now, and that suggested power use seems right.

I'm impressed with the Bushman fridge's build quality. We particularly like its generous 45L freezer with a separate door. The fittings and drawers seem sturdy, and a handy locking bar ensures it won't fly open when travelling. Although we plan to upgrade our van's 12V power soon, the fridge has been running on our basic 220A setup for a few weeks without trouble, so it's very efficient.

The Bushman DC190L is $2645 (bushman.com.au) and includes the fitting kit and free delivery. You can call the Bushman team for advice and fitting ideas on 03 8080 9990. The fridge comes with a three-year warranty and a five-year cover on the compressor. They also offer a lifetime phone backup for any service enquiries.

Further information: bushman.com.au

FORD RANGER SUPER DUTY:

SMARTER, STRONGER AND BUILT FOR TOWING

The Ford Ranger Super Duty coming in 2026 is more than muscle — 4500kg towing, serious payload and clever tech are set to make it the ultimate workhorse for Aussie towers and haulers.

Words Tim van Duyl Pics Supplied

SCAN TO PLAY VIDEO

ABOVE AND RIGHT The 2026 Ford Ranger Super Duty is set to change the game for towing in Australia; Eight lug wheels are needed to handle the immense GVM of the Super Duty and behind them are the biggest brakes fitted to a Ranger

The upcoming 2026 Ford Ranger Super Duty is set to redefine the mid-size pickup segment with its remarkable towing and payload capabilities. It is not designed to bridge the gap between the standard Ranger and larger trucks like the F-150. Instead, the Super Duty leaps ahead of the US trucks, like the F-150 and RAM 1500, where it matters to us, in tow and load capacities.

If you haven't seen our first look at the Ranger Super Duty, check out issue 655 or our two features on the *Caravan World* website. But for the lazy, here is a quick recap.

WHAT IS THE FORD RANGER SUPER DUTY?

The Ford Ranger Super Duty is a new model coming in 2026 for the best-selling Ranger lineup. Engineered to handle more demanding tasks, it boasts a maximum braked towing capacity of 4500kg, a gross vehicle mass (GVM) of 4500kg, and a gross combined mass (GCM) of 8000kg. These figures do not just surpass those of the standard Ranger, they blow it and the competition out of the water, carving a new niche outside the US truck and local ute markets.

Comparing key rival specifications

To appreciate the capabilities of the Ranger Super Duty, let's compare its key specifications with other models:

Specification	Ford Ranger Super Duty	Ford Ranger Sport V6	Ford F-150	Chevrolet Silverado 1500	RAM 1500
Max braked towing capacity	4500kg	3500kg	4500kg	4500kg	4500kg
GVM (gross vehicle mass)	4500kg	3280kg	3265kg	3221kg	3220kg
GCM (gross combined mass)	8000kg	6400kg	7765kg	7257kg	7246kg
Payload capacity	~1900kg*	~995kg	~710kg	~726kg	~726kg

**Estimated based on a estimated kerb weight of 2600kg.*

> "These figures do not just surpass those of the standard Ranger, they blow it and the competition out of the water, *carving a new niche outside the US truck and local ute markets*"

In terms of dimensions, the Ranger Super Duty is expected to mirror the standard Ranger's length of approximately 5.37m (17ft 6in), match the Ranger Raptor's width of about 2.02m (6ft 6in), and have a height just under 2m.

It's important to note that the payload calculation does not account for the weight of additional accessories or modifications, such as a tub or tray.

If you want to compare more utes and their capacities, check out our guide to dual cab utes in issue 659 or online.

RANGER SUPER DUTY TOWING EXAMPLES

Towing a 4500kg caravan

When towing at its maximum 4500kg braked trailer capacity:

- **Total weight:** 2600kg (vehicle) + 4500kg (trailer) = 7100kg
- **Remaining payload:** 900kg

Again, we are conservatively guessing the weight of the Ranger Super Duty but it's an educated guess with the Ranger Sport coming in at 2258kg with the Super Duty expected to carry more bulk in chassis and driveline upgrades.

Towing a 3500kg caravan

With a lighter, 3500kg trailer:

- **Total weight:** 2600kg (vehicle) + 3500kg (trailer) = 6100kg
- **Remaining payload:** 1900kg

Considering when towing a 3500kg caravan, a Toyota HiLux Rogue leaves you in the region of 64kg of payload (less than an average person's weight) it puts some perspective on how much more capable the Ranger Super Duty will be than its ute brethren. But what of the king of towing? The Toyota LandCruiser 300 Series Sahara?

ABOVE The Ford Ranger Super Duty is built tough and ready to tow heavy loads

RANGER SUPER DUTY VS LANDCRUISER 300 SERIES SAHARA

The LC 300 Series Sahara is a top-tier luxury offroader, renowned for its towing capability. But how does it compare to the Ranger Super Duty when towing a 3500kg trailer? Let's break it down.

Here are the key specs of the LandCruiser 300 Sahara:

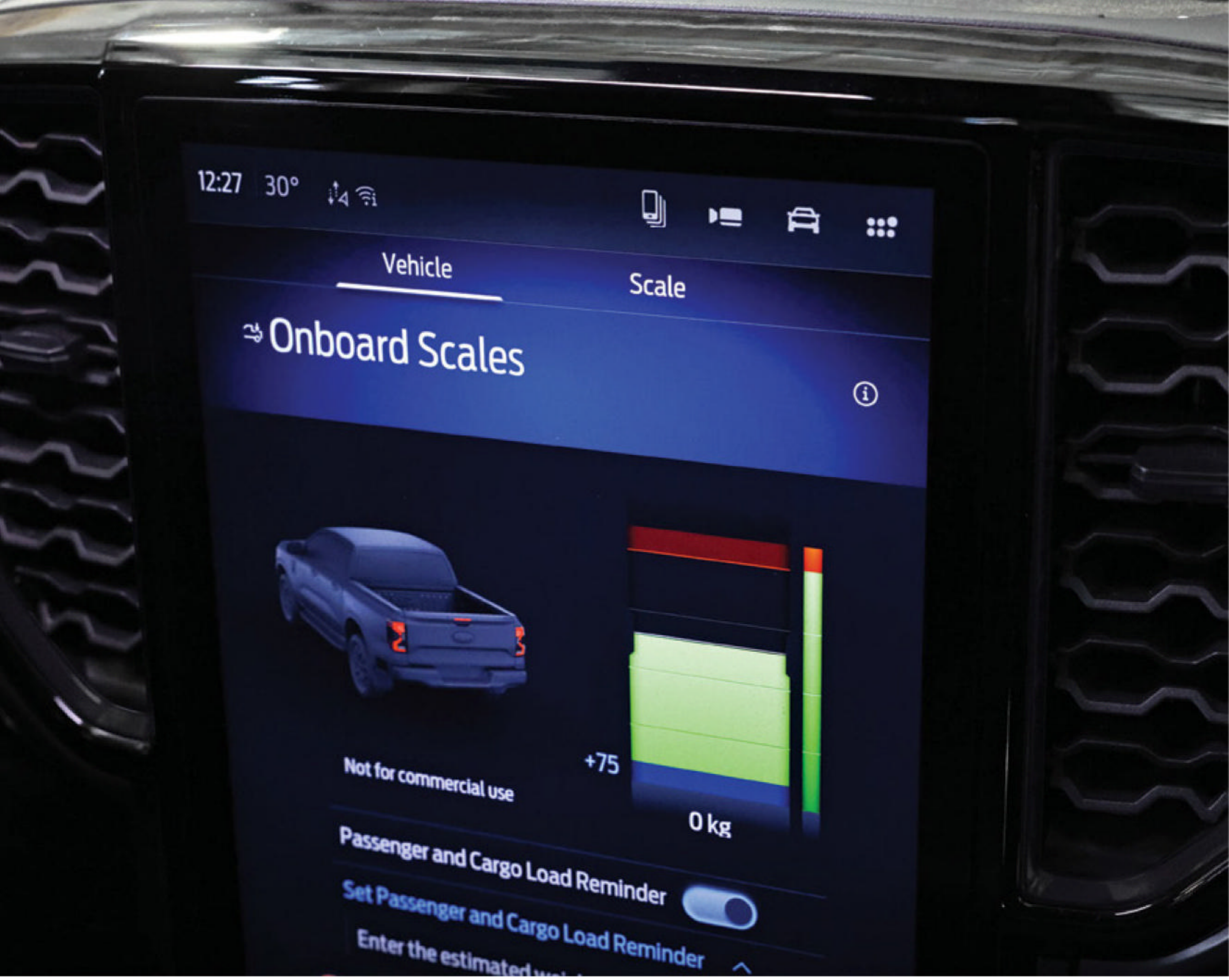
- **Vehicle weight (kerb weight):** 2630kg
- **Gross vehicle mass (GVM):** 3280kg
- **Gross combined mass (GCM):** 6750kg
- **Max braked towing capacity:** 3500kg

Towing a 3500kg caravan with the LandCruiser 300 Series Sahara

- **Total weight:** 2630kg (vehicle) + 3500 (trailer): 6130kg
- **Payload available:** 620kg

Yes, the final capacities and capabilities of the Ranger Super Duty are a calculated guess. But even if we are out by 300kg, the LC 300 Series Sahara looks well outplayed by the Super Duty's capacities and should lay claim to being the new kind of towing in Australia.

ABOVE AND BELOW The interior is typical Ranger quality; The Super Duty uses bespoke alloy control arms that help widen the vehicle's track and add strength



ABOVE The best technology to come to utes, Onboard Scales that measures your GVM and calculates your payload weight

> *"The Smart Hitch and Onboard Scales jump out as two of the best innovations in tow vehicles* since integrated Brake Controllers (the Super Duty will have that too)"

KEY RANGER SUPER DUTY TOWING TECHNOLOGIES

The Ford Ranger Super Duty will incorporate advanced towing technologies to enhance safety and convenience:

- **Smart Hitch:** Assists in proper weight distribution by providing guidance on tongue weight, ensuring safer towing experiences.
- **Onboard Scales:** Measures the payload weight in real-time, helping users stay within safe limits.
- **Integrated Brake Controller:** Facilitates seamless trailer braking integration.
- **Trailer Sway Control:** Enhances stability by detecting and mitigating trailer sway.
- **Powerful Braking System:** Features larger brakes for improved stopping power, accommodating the increased towing and payload capacities.

Ford's Onboard Scales system is a new feature designed to help drivers manage payload weight more accurately. Available in the US on some F-150s and the F-250 Super Duty, it has been confirmed for the upcoming Ranger Super Duty. This system also estimates the total weight of cargo and passengers in real-time.

Using built-in sensors, Onboard Scales measures the vehicle's load and displays the estimated weight on the infotainment screen, FordPass app, or LED taillight indicators (we haven't seen this in action, although we expect it will be similar to the American F-150 where the indicators blink to indicate the weight increase when loading). This is a very handy bit of tech that helps ensure drivers stay within the vehicle's payload limits, improving safety and preventing excessive wear on suspension and brakes.

The system also integrates with Smart Hitch, helping to balance trailer tongue weight (aka ball weight) for safer towing. By offering real-time feedback, Onboard Scales simplifies loading, making it easier to distribute weight properly and avoid going over the limit – essential for worksite, offroad or towing applications.

The Smart Hitch and Onboard Scales jump out as two of the best innovations in tow vehicles since integrated Brake Controllers (the Super Duty will have that too).

POWERTRAIN

The Ranger Super Duty will come equipped with a 3.0-litre turbocharged V6 diesel code named Lion. The Lion V6 has been seen in Ranger Sport and Everest for some time now yet we are reliably told the version in the Super Duty has been revised with heavy loads and towing in mind.

Power and torque figures have not been released but we expect them to be close to the existing 184kW at 3250rpm and 600Nm at 1750-2250rpm. Maybe peak torque is tuned to arrive earlier or more torque will be available, we wouldn't be surprised by either.

The V6 is paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission, the same 10R80 as seen across most of the ute, SUV and truck lineup from Ford. Whether it has additional cooling or torque capacities remains to be seen, but we would not put it past Ford to use a secondary transmission oil cooler as seen in the Ranger Raptor. Behind the box is a new transfer case that has been developed to handle more driveline torque while axles and driveshafts are new too.

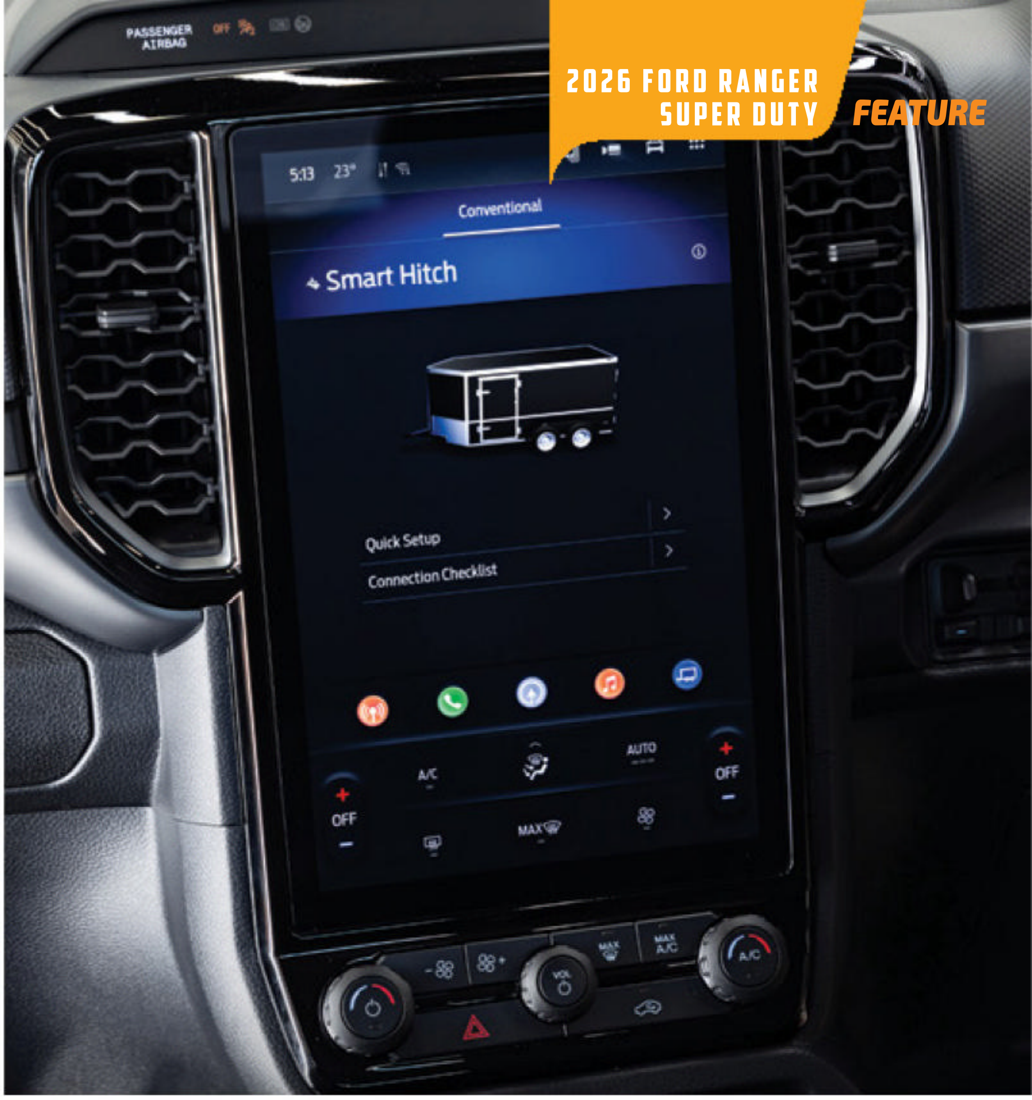
FUEL CONSUMPTION AND RANGER SUPER DUTY TANK SIZE

With a substantial fuel tank capacity of 130L, the Ranger Super Duty is designed for extended journeys. Assuming an average fuel consumption of 20L per 100km when towing a large offroad caravan, the Super Duty could achieve a range of around 650km. Drop the trailer and the Super Duty should easily surpass 1000km between refills.

FORD RANGER SUPER DUTY PRICING

While official pricing has not been announced, estimates based on the current Ranger lineup suggest:

Model	Price ex-ORC (AUD)
Ford Ranger Wildtrak V6	$73,590
Ford Ranger Sport V6	$66,690
Ford F-150 XLT SWB	$106,950
Ford F-150 Lariat SWB	$139,950
Toyota LandCruiser 300 Series Sahara	$135,501
RAM 1500 Laramie Sport	$141,950
Ford Ranger Super Duty (Single Cab Chassis) — estimated	$85,000–$90,000
Ford Ranger Super Duty (Double Cab Pickup) — estimated	$95,000–$100,000



ABOVE AND BELOW The Smart Hitch measures your ball weight allowing users to know where to adjust weight in their trailer for optimal balance; Payloads could be up to 1950kg, depending on the final kerb weight of the Ranger Super Duty

UNDERSTANDING THE ESTIMATED PRICING

The pricing for the Single Cab Chassis and Double Cab Pickup versions of the Ranger Super Duty is a best guess based on the standard Ranger lineup. Given its heavy-duty build, enhanced towing features and larger fuel capacity, it's fair to expect a solid price jump over the Ranger Wildtrak V6, but still significantly undercut the F-150.

For reference, the F-150 XLT starts at $106,950, meaning Ford won't want the Ranger Super Duty creeping too close to that price – especially considering the F-150's larger cabin and premium cabin. But it should sit comfortably above the Ranger Sport and Wildtrak V6 due to its extra hardware.

If Ford plays this right, the Ranger Super Duty will land right in that sweet spot – way more capability than a standard Ranger, but at a much more accessible price than an F-150 or LC 300 Series Sahara. That'll make it a seriously appealing option for tradies, towing enthusiasts and long-haul drivers who want big capability without going full American truck.

THE WRAP

The Ford Ranger Super Duty is shaping up to be an absolute weapon for towing and hauling, and it's loaded with the kind of features that make life a whole lot easier. With best-in-class tow and payload ratings, it was already a standout, but now, learning it will land with Onboard Scales and Smart Hitch, it's a truck that doesn't just carry the load – it helps you manage it like a pro.

And let's talk about that big 130L fuel tank. If you've ever had to plan your trip around dodgy roadhouse fuel stops, you'll know how much of a game-changer this is. The Super Duty's range is huge, making it perfect for long-distance touring, outback adventures, or big workdays where stopping for fuel is the last thing on your mind. Whether you're dragging a caravan up to Cape York, hauling a heavy work trailer or just loading up for a big weekend away, this thing will handle it all without breaking a sweat.

Ford has really nailed the formula here. Plenty of utes claim big tow numbers, but few can do it as safely, efficiently and comfortably (or legally) as this one. The tech in the Ranger Super Duty isn't just for show – it actually makes towing easier, from keeping weight distribution in check to helping you hitch up without the usual frustration and cursing.

So, if you're the kind of person who needs a proper workhorse – one that'll tow big, carry heavy and keep you moving further between fuel stops – this is it. The Ranger Super Duty isn't just playing the game – it's changing it.

ABOVE AND BELOW There is a reinforced mounting point for a second screen, radio hand pieces and more; The Ranger Super Duty uses Ford's excellent tie downs in the tub variants

> "The Ford Ranger Super Duty is shaping up to be an absolute weapon for towing and hauling, *and it's loaded with the kind of features that make life a whole lot easier*"

LEFT AND BELOW The Australian Standing Stones in the New England High Country, NSW; The Henry Lawson Festival in Grenfell, NSW, celebrates the famous writer

WHAT'S ON

NSW

Henry Lawson Festival

5–9 June 2025

The Central West NSW town of Grenfell puts on an epic festival on the King's Birthday long weekend to commemorate the legendary writer and the arts. The Henry Lawson Festival features a street party, parade, live music, food and market stalls. There will again be something for everyone with a swag of competitions, poetry events, the ever-popular Car Show and rides for the kids. The weekend also includes a real taste of the region with the Caragabal Camp Oven Cook-Off and Iandra Castle Open Day. Find out more online: henrylawsonfestival.com.au

Winter Solstice at the Australian Standing Stones

21 June 2025

The ancient Celts celebrated the summer and winter solstices when the day lengths reached their longest and shortest and their descendants hold a ceremony at the Australian Standing Stones in Glen Innes on the solstice days at solar noon — when the sun is at its highest point in the sky. All are welcome to attend. Find out more online: gleninneshighlands.com/winter-summer-solstice-celebrations.html

VIC

Woodend Winter Arts Festival

6–9 June 2025

The 20th annual Woodend Winter Arts Festival (WWAF) will deliver a four-day feast of music, words and ideas in the heart of the Macedon Ranges. Enjoy more than 100 artists performing in various venues throughout the village of Woodend. Find out more online: woodendwinterartsfestival.org.au

East Gippsland Winter Festival

20 June – 20 July 2025

Experience the best of winter in East Gippsland as the region comes alive in a festival of light, food, music, art and culture. A full program is available online: egwinterfest.com.au

Mildura Outdoor Living and Caravan Expo

27–29 June 2025

Held over three massive days at the Mildura Racecourse, this expo will showcase the latest caravans, RVs, 4WDs and camping gear. Head online for more info: outdoorlivingcaravanexpo.com.au/mildura

TAS

Dark Mofo

5–15 and 21 June 2025

Dark Mofo returns to Hobart in 2025 with an ambitious art and music program, alongside Dark Mofo rituals such as Winter Feast, the Ogoh-Ogoh, Night Mass and the Nude Solstice Swim on 21 June when everyone will bare all for a winter dip. Full program at: darkmofo.net.au

SA

The Adelaide Cabaret Festival

5–21 June 2025

The Adelaide Cabaret Festival is one of the biggest cabaret festivals in the world and the 2025 program features incredible performances by world-class local and international artists. Enjoy brand-new acts, comedic artists, cabaret favourites and much more. Tickets are on sale now: adelaidecabaretfestival.com.au

Adelaide Beer & BBQ Festival

6–8 June 2025

Celebrate 10 years of beers at the Adelaide Showground over the King's Birthday long weekend featuring bands, barbecues, festival events such as wrestling, eating contests and axe throwing and, of course, beers. Further information: beerbbqfest.com.au

WA

Smokin' Barrel Fest

15 June 2025

Head to the midwest town of Nanson, just north of Geraldton in the Chapman Valley, for the Smokin' Barrel Fest being held at the Burnt Barrel Outback Brewbq. This is the midwest's first fully sanctioned professional Kansas City Barbeque Society barbecue competition and has the support of Tourism WA to put the region on the national barbecue map. Professional pitmasters will compete in four categories (chicken, pork ribs, pork butt and brisket) with a prize pool of $5000. More information: burntbarrel.com/smokin-barrel-fest-2025

NT

Barunga Festival

6–9 June 2025

Barunga Festival, held 80km southeast of Katherine, is a must for anyone seeking an authentic Aboriginal cultural experience. An iconic family-friendly event on the national festival calendar, Barunga boasts a long and proud tradition of celebrating Indigenous music, culture and sport. Head online for tickets and a full program: barungafestival.com.au

The Tatts Finke Desert Race

6–9 June 2025

The Finke Desert Race is an offroad, multi-terrain two-day race for bikes, cars and buggies through desert country from Alice Springs to the small Aputula (Finke) community and back over the King's Birthday long weekend. Find out more online: finkedesertrace.com.au

QLD

Scenic Rim Eat Local Month

30 May – 29 June 2025

Scenic Rim Eat Local Month invites you to experience a month-long celebration of award-winning local produce, farms, wineries, distilleries and authentic paddock-to-plate experiences—just an hour from Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Check out the program online eatlocalmonth.com.au

Let's Go Queensland Caravan & Camping Supershow

4–8 June 2025

Held in the Brisbane Showgrounds, this Supershow will feature the latest RVs, 4WDs, masterclasses and much more. Buy tickets online: caravanqld.com.au/show/lets-go-queensland-caravan-camping-supershow

The COTY 2025 public Showcase next to Lake Pertobe in Warrnambool, Vic

Photographer
TED AIREY

WOOLEEN STATION:

Words and Pics
JILL HARRISON

NATURE-BASED STATION STAY

Explore Wooleen Station, where history, conservation and sustainable grazing practices create an unforgettable outback station stay experience in Western Australia's rugged Murchison region.

Wooleen Station's quarter of a million acres of mulga scrubland is located in a 3.6-billion-year-old landscape. It is one of 285 pastoral leasehold stations in the 850,000sq km semi-arid Southern Rangelands, in WA's Murchison region.

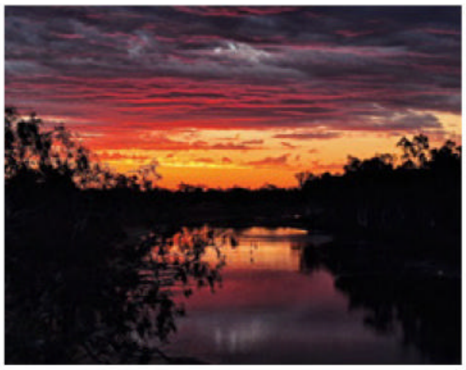
Originally founded in 1886, Wooleen's current owners, David and Frances Pollock, are committed to regenerating and preserving Woolen's unique ecology and finding a sustainable way to run stock economically. At the same time they are also looking after the environment that has experienced decades of over-stocking, crippling droughts, erosion and land degradation typical in the rangelands. Once a sheep grazing area, stations in the Murchison region now predominantly graze cattle.

The Pollocks say that traditional grazing practices are not sustainable in the rangelands where the average annual rainfall is 200-300mm.

"The rangelands are a renewable resource, but only if the land is managed so that it is able to renew itself and is healthy enough to withstand the normal cycles of climate," the couple explained.

The Pollocks periodically rest the landscape to allow it to recover from grazing. In 2007 they completely destocked for four years, turned off all the windmills and watering points to discourage kangaroos and wild goats and commenced a vegetation reestablishment program. This was a radical and economically costly move. They now only run cattle in a rotational grazing pattern for a few months of the year during the wetter months.

We joined David's four-hour afternoon tour and learnt about the importance of perennial arid plants and grasses and the Pollocks' commitment to land rehabilitation and making Wooleen an ecologically sustainable and viable



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Camping on the Murchison River; Birdwatching; Sunset at bush camp; Nesting budgies; Wooleen Station from the air (Image Tourism WA)

FAST FACTS

Wooleen Station is located off Twin Peaks–Wooleen Road, approximately 640km north of Perth and 194km via a bitumen/gravel road — suitable for all vehicles. Two-wheel drive may not be possible during heavy rain. The Murchison Oasis Roadhouse is 35km northwest of Wooleen Station.
Wooleen is part of the Wool Wagon Pathway from Geraldton to Exmouth.

Accommodation: Fully catered in the homestead, self-catered cabins, bush camping (suitable for caravans). Campsites have fire rings and composting toilets. Collect firewood in designated areas only. There are toilets and showers near the cafe.
On arrival check in at the Milimanmanha cafe, where you can collect a guidebook, maps, purchase local products and buy food. Wi-fi and mobile phone connection are available at the cafe and homestead area.
Dogs are not permitted at the homestead and cabins. They are allowed at the bush campsites and self-drive tracks but must be kept on a lead along the walk trails.

Best time to visit: April to October. Wooleen is closed to tourists over summer (the wet season in this part of Australia).

Find out more: You can learn more about Wooleen by reading David's book: *The Wooleen Way: Renewing an Australian Resource*.

For more information, head online: wooleen.com.au

enterprise. The role of dingoes to manage kangaroos, goats and foxes hasn't been a popular theory. The tour finished with sunset drinks at spectacular Budura Rock.

Unfortunately, their educational Iconic Dingo Encounter talks had been cancelled due to their resident dingo pair, who were raised in captivity at the Australian Dingo Foundation in Victoria, being shot in late September 2024.

Wooleen's rehabilitation program hasn't been easy. To supplement their income, Wooleen offers fully catered accommodation in their Australian National Trust listed homestead, which was built in 1918, and two self-catered fully equipped guesthouses. Further afield there are private bush campsites suitable for caravans along the Murchison River (where we camped), which offer a serene bush experience in the mulga scrub and rocky outcrop country.

You can enjoy marked bushwalking and mountain-bike trails, canoeing in the river, guided tours and workshops from April to October. Wooleen's Visitor Guide includes history, conservation strategies, trail guides and fauna lists.

Wooleen Lake, which only fills every 10 years, is listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA), attracting thousands of birds and drought refuge for fauna. You can also enjoy bird life along the Murchison River and Yewlands Pool. Budgerigars were nesting along the river during our visit. An impressive number of birds, reptiles, mammals, aquatic life and plants have been recorded at Wooleen. Wildflowers attract visitors during spring.

The Pollocks concluded: "It's not just for Wooleen, it's about the whole picture. To find a sustainable way to raise cattle in the rangelands. The environment has an extraordinary ability to repair itself, given the chance."

ITEHIL®
RUN
CHARGE
RO
HYBRID

ABOVE The ITEHIL RO Water Purification Unit makes accessing safe drinking water quick and simple

SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR WHEN YOU'RE OFF-GRID

When heading off-grid in Australia's most beautiful and remote locations, having a good-quality water purification unit can be a lifesaver.

A new small and innovative water purification unit producing safe drinking water has now been introduced into the Australian market by a company called ITEHIL (based in United States). The ITEHIL RO Water Purification Unit is a portable system designed to be simple and easy to use and almost silent in operation. The unit is compact, light and uses a two-step water purification process producing water that is free from almost any contamination. It is lightweight so it won't eat into your payload when travelling.

HOW IT WORKS

The ITEHIL RO Water Purification Unit has a powerful pump and two removeable filters that purify water and make it safe for drinking. The first filter (Hybrid Filter) removes organic material, pesticides and larger physical particles — this is an Active Carbon Filtration Process.

The second filter is a Reverse Osmosis Filter, which is comprises a membrane with nano-sized pores (0.001 microns) that prevents bacteria, viruses, heavy metals, sugars, limescale, soap scum and any object greater than the pore size passing through into the drinking water.

The two-step filtration system is marketed as making water from potentially polluted areas such as open water, puddles and tanks safe to drink, filtering out almost all contaminants. This is not a desalination unit, and it only filters fresh, non-salt water — it cannot produce fresh water from salt water. The lifespan of the filters will depend on use and the quality of the water being filtered, but the RO filter will last approximately 2000L–3000L while the Hybrid Filter will last approximately 1100L–1500L. A small light on the filtration unit will glow indicating when a filter is approaching its maximum use.

The unit is powered via the dual built-in 6000mAh lithium batteries paired with USB-C charging. With a full charge, the unit is stated to produce up to 26.5L of drinking water and will produce 500ml of drinking water per minute.

WHERE TO GET IT

Water filtration units are ideal for those travelling by vehicle or caravan who have weight constraints or are heading on long off-grid trips where refilling the water tanks will be required. It's also very handy for those travelling with young kids or large groups, when drinking water can get used up very quickly.

The ITEHIL RO Water Purification Unit is available online via its Australian distributor (skippypouches.com) for a RRP of $399 (which includes two filters), with free postage anywhere in Australia. For those travelling to remote locations purchasing additional filters would be prudent.

REDARC
LITHIUM BATTERY
12V 100Ah LiFePO4

COMING SOON: REDARC LITHIUM ADVENTURE BATTERIES

ABOVE REDARC's Lithium Adventure Batteries are designed for serious Aussie adventurers

Designed with off-grid touring in mind, REDARC Electronics' new Lithium Adventure Batteries (REDLAB) are made to deliver stable, long-lasting power in Australia's varied and demanding environments. With a robust construction, reliable performance in extreme conditions and seamless pairing with REDARC charging systems, the 12V 100Ah lithium LiFePO4 REDLAB units are aimed at caravanners and four-wheel drivers who love heading off the beaten track to explore Australia's beautiful but remote areas.

POWER TO SPARE

Caravanning setups are getting more power hungry with each passing year, so being able to run bigger setups with fewer batteries is enticing. The REDLAB batteries offer 100 per cent usable capacity — meaning you aren't limited by the reserve — as well as ultra-high charge and discharge rates and support for powerful inverters and chargers, meaning these new units deliver plenty of power without the bulk and weight of lots of batteries. The batteries offer more than 6000 charge cycles and include a state of charge display, so you always know how much power you have.

BUILT TO LAST

Like all of REDARC's high-quality gear, the REDLAB range has been built to withstand Australia's toughest terrains. The unit construction has an IP67 rating for water and dust protection as well as extreme vibration resistance, meaning they can handle rough corrugations like you'll find on the Gibb River Road. They've also been engineered to handle Australia's diverse climates, from the hot outback to freezing alpine mornings and include a built-in heater for below-zero charging.

A SMART SOLUTION

The REDLAB batteries are designed to work seamlessly with REDARC's BCDC and Manager30 chargers to offer a simple and reliable all-in-one power system that takes out the guesswork for users.

For peace of mind when on the road (or off it), the REDLAB batteries have been built to the latest standards certifications and include cutting-edge safety feature and a built-in isolation switch, making them safe to install, transport and ready for off-grid adventures.

FIND OUT MORE

To learn more about REDARC's new Lithium Adventure Batteries, head online: redarcelectronics.com

CERAKOTE CERAMIC HEADLIGHT RESTORATION KIT

Words and pics *John Ford*

Like many modern vehicles, the headlight lenses on my 200 Series LandCruiser had become cloudy due to oxidation of the lens material. Not only did they look unappealing, but the lights were becoming dim, which was particularly noticeable on low beam when the driving lights couldn't be used.

Polycarbonate lenses replaced glass a few decades ago because they are more resistant to stone damage and can be easily shaped to suit modern styling. A new car has UV protection on the lens, but this wears out in time. Vehicles stored in a garage won't have as much UV damage, of course, and headlight covers will slow the oxidation process, but in our case, the damage was done.

I tried some cheaper remedies without any luck, and I proved that toothpaste doesn't work, so when a friend suggested the Cerakote headlight restoration process, I decided to give it a go. Made in the USA, Cerakote offers a range of ceramic coatings for industrial applications. Its headlight restoration kit is a three-step process that requires no special tools — but a spray bottle for water, some masking tape and a few dry microfibre cloths will be handy.

The headlight restoration process is simple and only has three steps.

STEP ONE

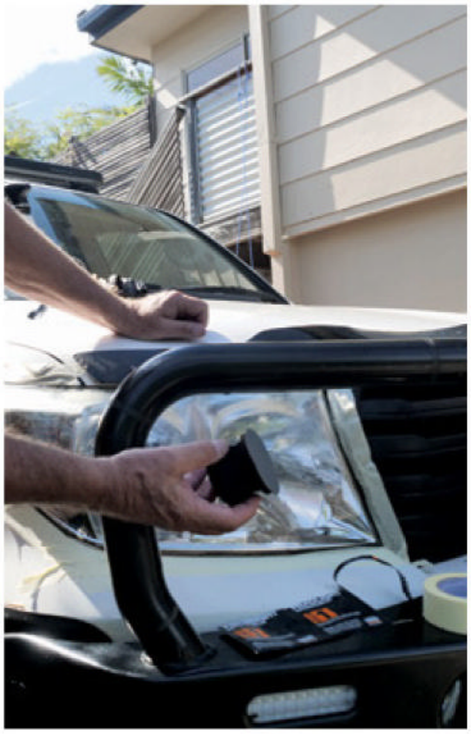
First, I cleaned the headlights with some detergent and rinsed them off. I then masked around the lights to protect the paint when sanding in step two. The restoration kit includes four sachets of oxidation remover for each headlight. So, I fitted the supplied vinyl glove and thoroughly wiped the first light in a circular motion with the impregnated wipe, which turned yellow as the oxidation was removed. I repeated the process with all four wipes and noticed the lights looked brighter but still had a hazy finish. I repeated step one with the four wipes for the second light.

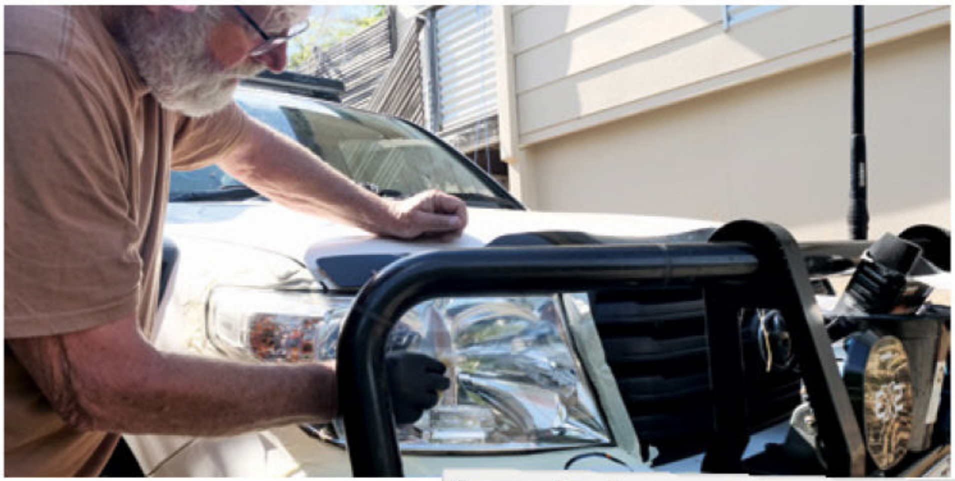
STEP TWO

Next, you sand the lights — first with 2000-grit sandpaper using the supplied Velcro pad, and then with 3000 grit to create a smooth, scratch-free surface. It's a wet process, so using a spray bottle with water or a slow trickle from a hose to keep the sandpaper moist is best. The sanding should take two or three minutes for each light.

STEP THREE

Thoroughly wash the lenses and let them dry completely before applying the Clear Coat. There is one pad for each light. Wipe the lens horizontally from the bottom to the top, using a 50 per cent overlap and applying only one coat. The results were impressive. The lights looked as good as new, making the car look much better. It's always satisfying when a product performs as expected. I was impressed with the result, and I look forward to the restoration being permanent because the kit comes with a lifetime guarantee.





CERAMIC
HEADLIGHT

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Clean with oxidation wipes; Headlights were a bit cloudy; Sand the lights; As good as new

WHERE TO GET IT

I purchased the Cerakote Ceramic Headlight Restoration Kit on amazon.com.au for $56 with free postage (price is subject to change). It arrived in about two days. I have also since heard that a genuine Toyota kit (part number 0887180100) sells for $59, and I'd be keen to hear if anyone has used it with success.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The new Fujinon binoculars provide 20x magnification power; Easy to carry; Great for bird watchers and nature lovers

FUJINON IMAGE STABILISED BINOCULARS

***Words** John Ford **Pics** Supplied*

A lot of caravanning types are nature lovers, and many of us are keen bird watchers. So, when Fujifilm suggested we try a pair of its new Fujinon Techno-Stabi TS-L 2040 stabilised binoculars for a couple of weeks, I was keen to see what the latest technology delivered.

In a past life, I had a camera and imaging business and sold many binoculars. Canon was an early adaptor of image stabilising technology in cameras and lenses, and in 1996, it applied the knowledge to its range of binoculars. As part of the Japanese Fujifilm Group, Fujinon added image stabilisation to its line of binoculars in 2002 and established a high reputation for its products.

Once you get above 10x magnification in binoculars, keeping them still enough to view the scene isn't easy. Magnification refers to the amount of enlargement of the viewed image. A 10x magnification will appear 10 times closer. Most people will find that 8x is the maximum they can keep still enough for a clear image.

The new Fujinon binoculars we reviewed provide 20x power, currently the maximum magnification available in mainstream binoculars. They utilise an electronically stabilised gimbal to support the internal lens prism. The company claims they can correct up to three degrees of movement, making them suitable for general use. Fujinon also offers the TSX range of lower magnification binoculars, featuring a six-degree correction, which is better suited for marine applications where a moving boat complicates keeping the image viewable.

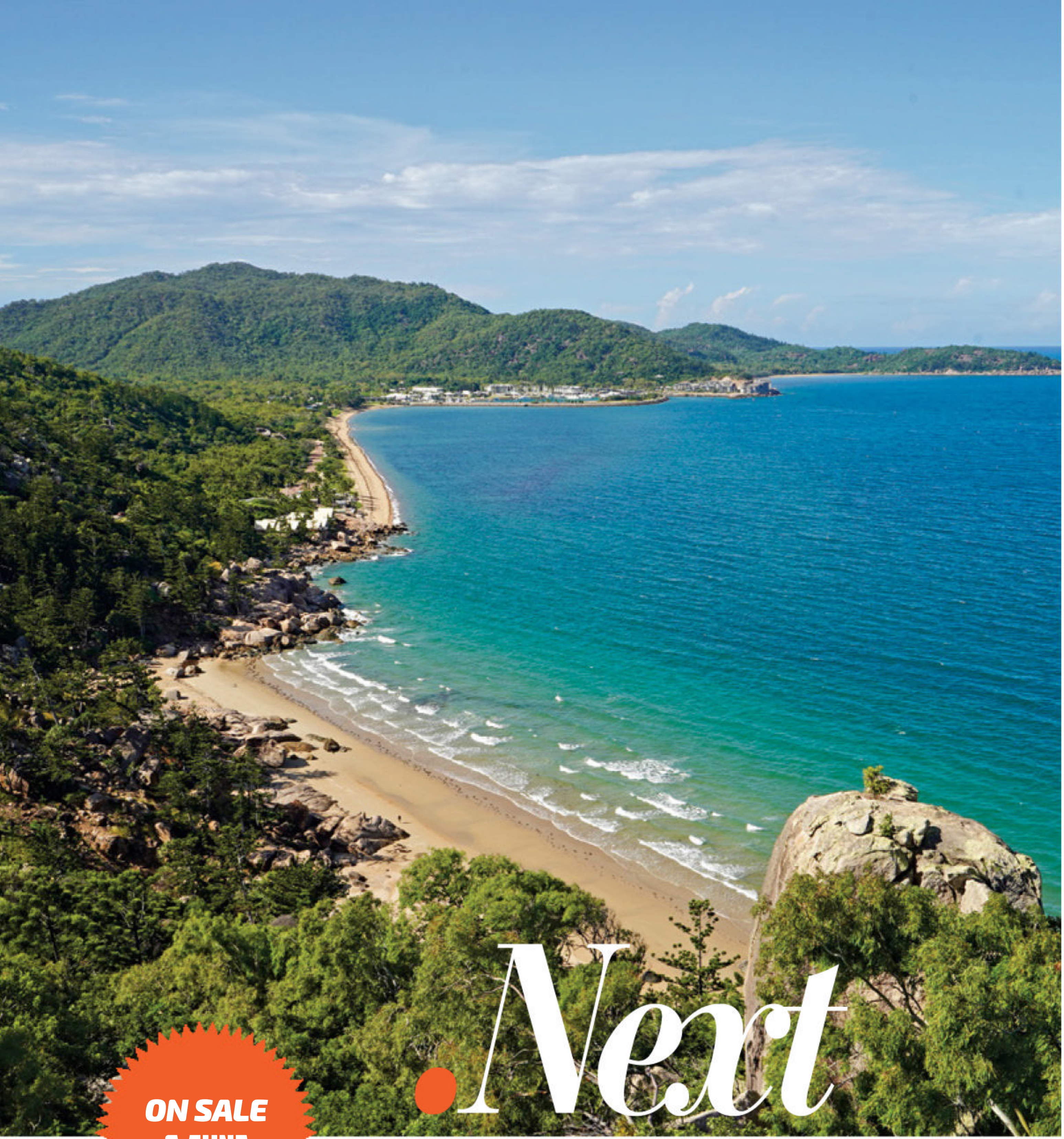
Fujifilm is recognised for quality components across its camera and binocular range and the extra dispersion (ED) glass lenses improve clarity and colour rendition in the new binoculars. The 40mm objective lenses up front add to the image brightness while allowing a relatively compact design.

The TS-L 2040 binoculars have a sleek, modern look and a firm texture that falls naturally to hand. They include hand and neck straps and lens covers that can tether to the body. Weight with the included case and two AAA batteries is close to 900gm, so they might be for more general use rather than backpacking. Battery life is around 30 hours, and while many devices have rechargeable batteries, I like the simplicity of Alkaline versions. Rechargeable lithium AAAs are an option.

The waterproof rating is IPX7, meaning they can survive being underwater at a metre for 30 minutes, so they are well up to a stroll in the rain.

It didn't take long to set up the binoculars to suit me. The rear elements swivelled to set the eye distance, and the eyepieces twisted smoothly for use without my glasses, which I prefer. Focusing is smooth and precise with the well-placed centre wheel. The difference between image stabilisation and not stabilised is dramatic when I turned on the IS switch, which powers off automatically to save battery life. The brightness of the image and the clarity edge-to-edge were very impressive. I could see fine detail in flowers and birds 50m away, so the Fujinons offer great versatility for birdwatching. The minimum focus distance is 5m. As well as for bushwalks, the binoculars would be great at concerts, sporting events and checking out the moon and planets.

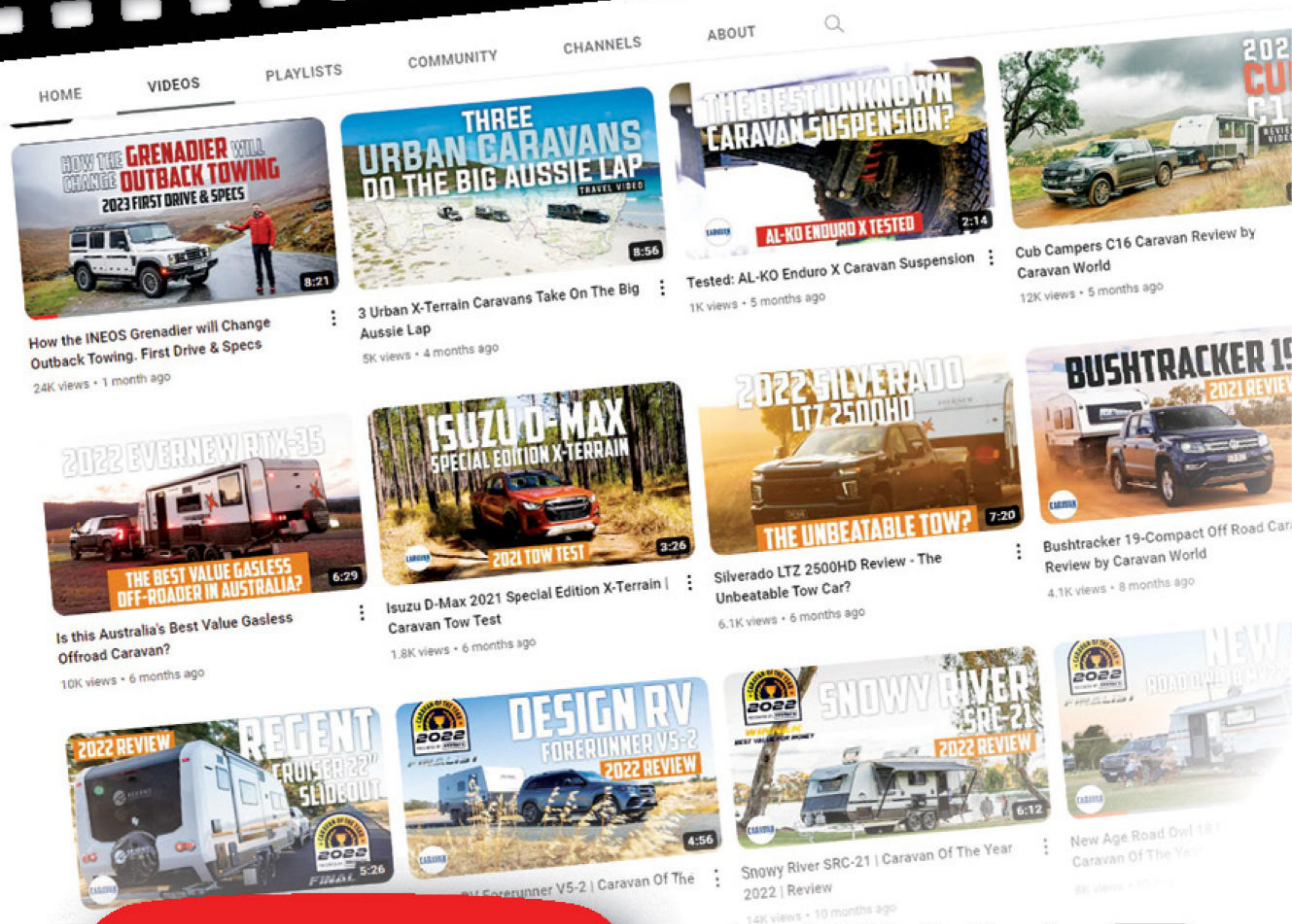
Fujinon Techno-Stabi TS-L 2040 stabilised binoculars have a RRP of $2149, but I noticed they are sold out already on the official Fujifilm site. The new TSL range also includes a 16x40 set at $1999. Find out more online: fujifilm-houseofphotography.com.au



ON SALE
6 JUNE

Next issue

Join us in June for part two of our Caravan of the Year 2025 presented by MSA 4X4 Accessories. There'll be the final six reviews, some great advice from John Ford about upgrading your caravan's power supply and Catherine Best will take us on a journey to Magentic Island, Qld.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THE BEST UNKNOWN CARAVAN SUSPENSION?
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